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# THE HISTORY OF THE 2/6<sup>TH</sup> LANCASHIRE FUSILIERS

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**THE HISTORY OF  
THE 2/6<sup>th</sup> LANCASHIRE FUSILIERS,**



# The History of the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers

(which amalgamated successively with the 1/6th  
and the 12th Battalion of the same Regiment).

The Story of a 2nd Line Territorial Battalion,  
1914—1919.

BY

CAPTAIN C. H. POTTER, M.C.,

AND

CAPTAIN A. S. C. FOTHERGILL.

With appreciations by

General Sir H. A. LAWRENCE, G.C.B.  
(late Chief of the General Staff, B.E.F.).

General Sir HUBERT GOUGH, G.C.M.G.  
(late Vth Army Commander).

General Sir ALEXANDER J. GODLEY, K.C.B.  
(G.O.C. Southern Command).

Major General Sir NEILL MALCOLM, K.C.B.

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P87

***FOREWORD by***  
***General The Hon. Sir H. A. LAWRENCE, G.C.B.***  
***(late Chief of the General Staff, B.E.F.)***

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The history of the formation of the 2/6th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers and its participation in the Great War is an essentially human document. Official histories of the conditions which determined the policy of Governments or of the Higher Commands have their special interest, but this book will appeal to every section of the community.

Its principal value is that it brings simply and plainly before all who care to learn, the heroic qualities of our race.

If anyone ever feels a doubt as to the future of our people let him read the story of the patient endurance of incredible hardship, of the heroic courage and the steadfast will to win which animated these men from Lancashire.

The authors have rendered a public service by preserving the history of this splendid Battalion.

H. A. LAWRENCE.

20—11—26.

***FOREWORD by General Sir HUBERT GOUGH,  
G.C.M.G. (Late Vth Army Commander).***

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It is with real pleasure that I write a Foreword to this book because it brings before one's mind thoughts of wonderful endurance and heroic courage, of gay hearts, and unselfish comradeship.

It is truly as General Sir Herbert Lawrence has already said a human document, and as such it sheds as valuable a light on some of the causes that brought Britain so victoriously through that terrific struggle as do those histories which deal with the Higher Commands and the broader aspects of the war. I would be the last to minimise the importance of British military leadership and British staff organisation and efficiency in winning the war, but the foe himself was so efficient, so numerous, and so stout, that nothing but hard fighting, even harder than his own, could eventually have undermined the German resistance and made possible our final victories from August to November, 1918. When it came to hard fighting, with its terrible conditions of cold, of mud, and of hunger, it was on the officers and the men belonging to individual units that, of necessity, the real burden fell. They were the rock on which all the operations rested. Fortunately for this Country they stood the strain, and never failed. Without that wonderful spirit they displayed and that splendid endurance the war could not have been won. It is the chief merit of this book that for once in a way it lifts the veil and shows us what manner of men ours were, how incredible were their sufferings, and how splendid the courage and cheerfulness with which they faced and overcame them.

As the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers were under my command during what I may term the great St. Quentin battle of March, 1918, and some interesting notes appear in this volume on the subject, it is perhaps not out of place on my part to make some remarks on this episode.

The share that was taken by the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers and the 66th Division in this drama is fully described in the following pages, and I will confine myself to making three observations on the battle and its results. This story, if, indeed, further proof were required, should dispose of the tales once so freely bruited abroad that the 5th Army gave way before that great German attack in an inexplicable, if not in a disgraceful, manner. How such an idea was circulated or became current need not be entered on here, but I confess it still fills me with a righteous indignation when I recall that a certain Cabinet Minister said to me: "You will admit that your troops left their position at times before they should have."

I had no opportunities accorded me of thanking the troops that fought under my command in that great battle, and it is a pleasure that I have here an opportunity to thank at least one unit, for their heroic and steadfast conduct from first to last during those days of fearful struggle.

Secondly, to understand this battle it should be realised that it never was the rôle of the 5th Army to hold the line or attempt to hurl back the German onslaught. The numbers placed at our disposal put such a conception out of court at once. Quite early on the first day (March 21st) I issued instructions to the four Corps Commanders that they were not to risk the line being permanently and decisively overwhelmed, and that operations were to be conducted on the principles of a rearguard delaying the enemy to the utmost whilst avoiding decisive action. This was recognised by Field Marshal Lord Haig as lately as 10th October, 1926, when he unveiled the Memorial to the South Africans on this very battlefield. He said that "For several days General Gough and the gallant officers and men under his command fought a desperate rearguard battle against heavy odds. We owe much to that first gallant and successful effort."

Rearguard actions against overwhelming odds and on an enormous front are in the nature of things extremely difficult operations, and I can only say that it would not be easy to find an example in history of a rearguard conducted under such conditions which was carried out with the steadfastness and sound initiative displayed by the troops of the 5th Army in March, 1918. If the fact that it was a rearguard action, and that such action was the correct tactics for the occasion, had been recognised earlier,

it is probable that the 5th Army would have received more honour from the country than it did.

Thirdly, it should be remembered that the Germans staked all on winning this battle, and with it the war. They did not win it, though they undoubtedly went near doing so. Like all those who stake everything on one last throw, their hopes and morale were liable to disappear if that miscarries. In this narrative readers will find evidences of this psychological fact before ten days of battle closed. By then the hopes of the Germans of winning this battle and with it the war vanished. It was decisive. From that moment the Germans had in truth lost the war and we had won it, though much remained to be done. The principal burden of this decisive battle fell on the 5th Army, and it can be a subject of pride to all those who formed part of that Army that their steadfast and astonishing endurance well and truly laid the foundations of subsequent victory.

HUBERT GOUGH.

20 12 26.

**FOREWORD by SIR ALEXANDER J. GODLEY,  
K.C.B., K.C.M.G., A.D.C.**

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I was fortunate enough to have the 66th Division, of which the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers formed part, in my Army Corps from September, 1917, to February, 1918. I think that the reason Captains Potter and Fothergill have done me the honour to ask me to write a foreword to their excellent record of the doings of the Battalion is that it fought under my command in the hardest trial and the greatest test of valour and efficiency that could fall to the lot of any Battalion. I refer to the third Battle of Ypres, or the Battle of Passchendaele, as it is sometimes called. I have read with the greatest interest the chapter in which the authors so graphically describe the work of the Battalion there, and can only say that their account of the desperate fighting which took place is in no way exaggerated.

I have read no account which brings more vividly to mind the desperate conditions under which this battle was waged and the valour and dogged pluck and determination with which it was carried through by men such as those of which this Battalion was composed.

The following winter in the line between Passchendaele and Gheluvelt, was, as the authors very rightly say, a most trying tour of duty, and their account of the conditions in which they lived should bring home to all readers a realisation of the immensity of their achievement.

But I must join issue with the authors as regards their statement that the duration of the war was not sufficiently long to transform them into "pukka" soldiers.

I am not one of the authorities who divide soldiers into two classes, and I can only say that if the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers were not soldiers—and the very best of soldiers—then, in my 40 years' experience of soldiering I have not yet learnt what a soldier is!

I take off my hat to them, and am more proud than I can say to have served with such soldiers and to have had the honour of writing this word to say so.

ALEX. J. GODLEY.

Government House, Salisbury.  
November 29th, 1926.

***FOREWORD by Major-General Sir NEILL MALCOLM,  
K.C.B. (Late Chief of the British Military  
Mission to Berlin).***

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In December, 1917, I had the good fortune to be appointed to succeed Sir Herbert Lawrence, one of the most distinguished soldiers of our time, in the command of the 66th Division. It is needless to say that under him the 66th were highly efficient, well trained, and full of confidence. Indeed, the standard was one not easy to maintain. For myself I may say that I then held, and still hold, the opinion that there is no more enviable position than the command of a British Division in time of war.

The 66th had already distinguished itself, especially at Passchendaele, but early in 1918 it was to undergo its fiercest ordeal. After a few weeks in the Ypres Salient we were moved South to the Fifth Army, where, as this volume tells, on the 21st March we felt the full weight of Ludendorff's terrific onslaught. The 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers were on the left flank of the Division responsible for supporting the front line troops and for maintaining connection with 16th Division to the North. For what followed I can do no better than refer the reader to the very clear and detailed account which has been compiled by Captains Potter and Fothergill. Many hard things were said at the time about the fighting of the Fifth Army; some by people who should have known better, some by people who were not in a position to know anything. In the ten days' fighting which followed the 66th Division was practically destroyed. All fought well, but none better than the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers. We have often heard of a "soldier's battle" won by the stolid determination and sterling fighting qualities of the man in the ranks. Other battles have been won by the military genius of the supreme Commander. March, 1918, differed from both, and I have no hesitation in saying that disaster was

averted by the resolution and leadership of Regimental Officers. After the first few hours in that dense mist the responsibilities of the junior officers from Platoon Commanders upwards was very great, and most nobly they responded to the needs of a situation which was at times almost desperate. In saying this I do not in any way belittle either the higher command or the private soldier.

Instances of individual initiative are plentiful in this story of the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers, and nothing that I could write would add to their value, but when the reader turns to the list of casualties and learns that on the 31st March the surviving strength of the Battalion was no more than one officer and eighty other ranks, he will realise something of that fiery trial. Twelve officers were killed or died of wounds, and of these we may surely say with Napier that "none died with greater glory, though many died and there was much glory."

NEILL MALCOLM.

20th December, 1926.

The authors wish to record their warm appreciation for the assistance given in the compilation and production of this history by the Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Men of the Battalion, and desire to mention individually the names of the following contributors, without whose assistance this book could not have been produced in its completed form :

Lieut.-Col. F. T. Prince, V.D.  
 Col. H. L. Anderton, T.D.  
 Lieut.-Col. L. M. Robinson, M.C.  
 Lieut.-Col. W. B. Little, D.S.O., M.C.  
 Lieut.-Col. R. F. Gross, D.S.O.  
 Lieut.-Col. E. Nares, M.C.  
 Major the Rev. F. Chesnutt-Chesney.  
 Major L. A. Dingley.  
 Major F. N. Liddell, M.C.  
 Capt. J. Lyell Lee, M.C.  
 Capt. H. C. Gill, M.C.  
 Capt. N. J. Laski.  
 Capt. W. B. McCulloch.  
 Capt. J. B. Gartside, M.C.  
 Capt. H. A. Higginson.  
 Capt. D. Pennington, M.C.  
 Lieut. E. Ormerod.  
 Lieut. C. Cheney.  
 Sgt. Harding.  
 Sgt. Thornley.  
 Cpl. H. Horrocks.  
 Pte. E. Harrop.  
 Pte. S. Hinde, M.M.

The staff of the Records Office at Preston has rendered invaluable assistance in searching the official records of Casualties and Honours and Awards. The authors are also deeply indebted to the General Officers who have written Forewords, and to Brigadier-General A. R. Burrowes, C.M.G., D.S.O., for his kind criticism on reading the manuscript of the book.

## PREFACE.

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In the perusal of history we are sometimes inclined to wish that the "Captains and the Kings" would depart for a while and that we could read and learn of the thoughts and actions of ordinary men; how they lived and with what philosophy they faced interesting situations in the world's history.

It is in this mood mainly that the following pages will interest the reader, as they contain an account of the ordinary life of a typical 2nd Line Territorial Battalion during the period of the Great War both in England and "Overseas."

According to some authorities the combatant forces to whom the honour of defending their country was entrusted in that great crisis were divided into two classes—"Regular soldiers" and "Camouflaged Civilians." For us who were members of the 2/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers the duration of the war was not sufficiently long to transform us into "Pukka" soldiers. If the hostilities had been of the nature of a second "Hundred Years War" instead of lasting only four and a half years, possibly this result might have been obtained. As it was, however, at the end of the period we were unable either to salute with the galvanic precision, or slap the stocks of our rifles with the joyous abandon of the Guards; but like the Scot, when joking, we both saluted and presented arms "with deefeculty."

To the end we remained more or less what we were when we started, a body of indignant civilians who heard the call in 1914 and felt compelled to take up arms to defend our Country.

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# The History of The 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers

1914—1919.

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## CHAPTER I.

### SOUTHPORT.

"At the halt! on the right form platoon!!  
At the halt!! on the right form platoon!!!  
Unless odd numbers mark time two paces,  
How the H—l can the rest form platoon?"

ON August 15th, 1914, the Government called on the Territorial Army to volunteer for Service Overseas. Units of which not less than 60 per cent. volunteered were designated "General Service" and were ordered to recruit up to establishment and 25 per cent. beyond it. In conformity with this order the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, which was then in camp at Turton on the Bolton Moors, sent over two officers—Captains E. Woolmer and G. Scott to Rochdale—to secure recruits to fill the places of the three hundred men in the Battalion who were medically unfit for Foreign Service, or who for various reasons were either disinclined or unable to fulfil more than their statutory obligations for "Home Service." After an intensive recruiting campaign of one day these officers on going down to the Drill Hall in the evening found some fifteen hundred men who had responded to the call. Of this number those who passed the medical examination and were in excess of the Battalion's requirements remained

at the Depôt. A similar wonderful response was made to the call for recruits at every Territorial Depot throughout the Kingdom. The Government therefore decided to take steps to duplicate the "General Service" Territorial Force Units. These second Units were originally described as "Reserve Battalions," but later, when still further expansion took place, a method of fractional nomenclature was introduced, and the designation of the 2/6th and 3/6th Battalions was employed to show that the Units in question were the 2nd and 3rd lines of the original 6th Battalion.

On September 10th, 1914, the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, as part of the 42nd Division, embarked at Southampton for Egypt. To this Division belongs the honour of being the first Territorial Division to leave England's shores for Foreign Service. Prior to this the "Home Service" details of the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, under the command of Captain N. J. Laski, had moved into Camp at Mossborough. The other officers at that Camp were Captain F. A. H. Bealey and 2/Lieutenants J. H. Tomlinson, F. Chesnutt-Chesney, O. Cooper, and G. S. Wareham.

On September 29th, 1914, Lt.-Col. F. T. Prince, V.D., was appointed to command the Reserve Battalion of the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and this may be considered the official birthday of the Unit—later known as the 2/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers.

Lt.-Col. F. T. Prince had seen long and honourable service in the Volunteer and Territorial Forces. In 1888 he had been gazetted 2nd Lieut. in the 4th V.B. Manchester Regiment and had passed successively through every grade until in December, 1909, he had been appointed Lieutenant-Colonel and transferred to the Command of the East Lancashire Army Service Corps (T.F.). He completed his period of command of that Unit in December, 1913, when he was transferred to the Territorial Force Reserve and appointed to command the Manchester Brigade of the National Reserve. When appointed to command the 6th Reserve Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers he brought with him as Adjutant, Captain (afterwards Major) S. Ledward of the 6th Battalion Manchester Regiment (T.F.). By this time the Battalion was up to war establishment except for officers. In addition to the six mentioned as being at Mossborough Camp, Capt. J. N. D. Molesworth, 2/Lts. W. H. Williams and J. Taylor were

at the Depôt at Rochdale, 2/Lt. W. Taylor in charge of the Company raised at Middleton, and Capt. J. E. Sutcliffe in command of the company at Todmorden.

The first act of Colonel Prince was to choose the following additional officers—Captains J. C. Walker, N. K. Plummer, and A. D. Howarth; 2nd.-Lieuts. J. L. Collins, C. H. Potter, B. W. Shaw, W. D. Shaw, W. H. Prince, T. R. Taylor, H. B. Carlisle, and G. C. Thompson.

In the early days of October, 1914, the camp at Mossborough was broken up and "the details" marched to Southport, where they occupied billets. Here training began under the supervision of Colonel Prince, and the men were fitted out in the old red and blue uniforms with pipe clay facings. Meanwhile the training of the new recruits was proceeding at Rochdale, Middleton, and Todmorden.

At Rochdale the Morning Parade was marched up to Cronkeyshaw Common, there to be initiated into the intricacies of squad drill, by those who, on account of previous military service, or superior adaptability, were regarded as potential N.C.O.'s. Those officers who were sufficiently advanced in military knowledge were entrusted with a squad, but the others graced the proceedings only by their presence and attended special drills in the afternoons under Captain Walker. The rank and file were still and for a long time subsequently in civilian clothes and clogs were the favourite footwear. On a route march the command "Pick up those feet" could not, therefore, be uttered without a risk that half the force would simultaneously lose its clogs.

Early in November the Middleton and Todmorden companies moved into billets at Rochdale, and on November 12th the entire force entrained in the morning for Southport. That departure was memorable. The platform at Rochdale was thronged with relatives and friends of both sexes who kept handing out refreshments, both liquid and solid, to the departing heroes. Tears and sighs were mingled with laughter and cheers. The scanty ideas of discipline imparted to the men by their equally inexperienced officers vanished to the four winds. Ranks were hopelessly broken as the recruits were not in uniform, and because they were unknown to their officers they could not be distinguished from their friends; how

they finally got into the waiting train will ever remain a mystery.

On arrival in Southport the Battalion was a united Unit for the first time in its history. Eight companies were now formed, each containing on an average two-thirds Foreign Service volunteers and one-third Home Service men. The officers of each Company were as follows :

- A Company, Capt. F. A. H. Bealey, with 2/Lts. J. L. Collins and C. H. Potter.
- B Company, Capt. N. J. Laski, with 2/Lts. O. Cooper and W. D. Shaw.
- C Company, Capt. N. K. Plummer, with 2/Lts. G. S. Wareham and T. R. Taylor.
- D Company, Capt. J. E. Sutcliffe, with 2/Lts. W. H. Williams and G. C. Thompson.
- E Company, Capt. A. D. Howarth, with 2/Lt. J. Taylor.
- F Company, 2/Lt. J. N. Tomlinson, with 2/Lt. W. H. Prince.
- G Company, Capt. F. Chesnutt-Chesney, with 2/Lt. H. B. Carlisle.
- H Company, Capt. J. N. D. Molesworth, with 2/Lt. W. Taylor.

Capt. B. W. Shaw was appointed Adjutant, and Capt. Ledward promoted to Major.

The Territorial Force at this time was severely handicapped in obtaining any kind of military equipment, as its interests were subordinated to those of "Kitchener's Army." This had a preferential call on the available resources of the Country, and Army contractors were unable and in some cases forbidden to proceed with the equipment of Territorial Units until the prior claims of the New Armies had been satisfied.

At Southport the Battalion was in excellent billets in the Boarding and Apartment Houses along and near the sea front, and was splendidly treated.

Those were days when enthusiasm ran high and subalterns, in their zeal, saluted anything in uniform, and "Red Hats" had not commenced to "strafe."

A platoon was given "Eyes left" to a Salvation Army officer only partly visible as he was emerging from a doorway. A Brigadier, watching a morning drill on the sands,

approached an officer and asked what his men were doing ; on being informed that they were "Forming fours" by numbers, he remarked, "Excellent ! I congratulate you." When marching along the fore-shore, singing—an excellent thing—was encouraged. The C.O.'s favourite refrains were "Land of hope and glory" and "Soldiers of the King," but his taste was not shared by the men, and it was tacitly agreed that volume of sound should be reserved for such favourites as :

" When the beer is on the table  
I'll be there, I'll be there.  
When the beer is on the table  
I'll be there."

Or the parody of another Salvation Army hymn :

" Wash me in the water  
Where you washed your dirty daughter,  
And I shall be whiter  
Than the whitewash on the wall."

The return march from the morning's drill on the sands culminated in a "Peacock" Parade. No sooner had the feet of the first four men of the column touched the asphalt of the street than the order "March to attention" rang out and the band began to play. Down Lord Street we swung to the admiration of the crowd, up Neville Street we turned, and invariably heard, above the cheers of the crowd, the voice of one enthusiast, an old gentleman with a long beard, who yelled, "Gallants lads, I see some V.C.'s among you." At this our heads went higher, chests expanded, and we stepped out for the culmination of the drama in the ceremony of "Fall out the officers" and "Parade, Dismiss," impressively rendered in front of the Orderly Room.

By the end of the year "khaki" had been supplied to all and "civvies" and scarlet and pipe clay became memories. Additional officers had also reported—2/Lts. E. J. Jones, J. L. Lee, H. C. Gill, R. Leak, and Lt. and Q.M. W. Lawrence

The New Year, 1915, started with inoculations. Also at this period, "The Higher Command" began to take notice of us, and we were inspected first by General Bethune and within a week by General Pole-Carew.

Battalion training was by this time in full swing, the

old eight company system had passed out of existence and the four company and platoon system had taken its place.

Towards the end of January 2/Lt. E. N. Molesworth and our first Medical Officer, Capt. J. R. B. Russell, reported for duty. In those early days of the war the scarcity of rifles and ammunition was one of the most serious handicaps to military expansion. After the demands of the troops on "Active Service" had been met there was no adequate reserve supply left to equip Units in training, who had perforce to be content with what they could get. The Battalion for some time had been in possession of one hundred long Lee Enfield rifles which were borne with no small pride by the leading company when on parade or at the head of the column on a route march.

Early in February ammunition arrived, and we realised that the time had come for us to fire our first musketry course. Two ranges were available for this purpose, one at Crossens and the other at Altcar, and each was occupied simultaneously by half the Battalion. Our hundred rifles did yeoman service, fifty being allotted for each range. In the light of later experience it must be admitted that range discipline, both on the firing point and in the butts, left much to be desired, but what was lacking in this respect was made up by enthusiasm. The "rapid fire" practices in particular were blazed away with great earnestness and would have done wonderful execution amongst an advancing enemy, provided that the enemy had been so accommodating as to furnish a sufficiently obvious and extended target.

Again, for recruits six bulls out of five shots is very fair shooting, and particularly so when it could be done as easily at 500 yards as at 200 yards and in any type of wind, but the explanation of this phenomenon was simple—excess of zeal on part of the party in the butts who marked "not wisely but too well."

During February, 2/Lts. A. Greenwood, W. Redmond, F. W. Coe, W. B. McCulloch and A. S. C. Fothergill reported for duty. Our training also became more advanced, trench digging, out-post schemes, and even a Divisional Field Day appeared in the curriculum.

Early in March, Japanese rifles were served out to all, and the Battalion became an armed force. During the same month Capt. Bealey went to Altcar for a fortnight's

musketry course, 2/Lt. E. Jones to a course of instruction in drill at Chelsea, 2/Lt. J. L. Lee to Altcar for a course of instruction in the machine gun. The latter was followed a fortnight later by a party of N.C.O.'s and men, and thus the first Battalion Machine Gun Section was formed.

There were changes also in our establishment, Capt. J. N. D. Molesworth transferred to the Royal Engineers and Major Walker to the 2/7th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers; in addition 2/Lts. F. S. T. Cooper, H. W. Walton, and A. L. Herridge reported for duty, also at the end of the month, 2/Lts. J. Taylor, T. R. Taylor, and G. C. Thompson proceeded to Egypt to join the 1/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers.

During April rumours began to spread of an impending move from Southport to a new training area. The first destination mentioned was Malvern; later Dorking, Redhill, or Reigate, points on the second line of London Defences. The weather was now fit to put troops under canvas, so that it occasioned no surprise to hear that we were at last to get away from billets, the great foe to real training.

News came on April 30th that the 1/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers had proceeded from Egypt to the Dardanelles. This news was of special interest to us, and we thought of the three officers we had recently sent out as being the first of our comrades to have the honour of going on Active Service.

The month of May still found the Battalion at Southport, but signs multiplied which made us think we should not remain there much longer.

A third line was in process of formation, and Major Ledward, Capts. Tomlinson and Plummer, Lt. H. B. Carlisle, 2/Lts. A. Greenwood and H. W. Walton went from us to form the nucleus of officers.

On May 14th our long stay in Southport came to an end and the Battalion entrained for Crowborough, near Tunbridge Wells.

In recalling the "Southport days" numerous incidents of a lighter vein come to mind: one concerns a subaltern who was not satisfied with the "March discipline" of his men, and told the delinquents that if he had to point out their shortcomings again he would make the platoon "Mark time" all the way from Southport to Birkdale. Another

memory or those days concerns Sergeant-Major Burgon of D Company, who, at Company Orders, always addressed the following remarks as a sort of accusatory statement to his Company Commander: "I told them, Sir, but they know. They think they know everything, Sir; that's why they keep having to come up here."

## CHAPTER II.

### CROWBOROUGH AND COLCHESTER.

The departure from Southport marked the end of a stage in our development. The 66th Division, commanded by Major-General Beckett, was now a distinct, though not a complete unit.

Our Brigade (the 197th) was incomplete, as the 2/5th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers had left the Division and the 3/5th, which was to take its place, was only just forming.

The composition of the Division at this time was:

197th Brigade.	198th Brigade.
2/6th Lancs. Fusiliers.	2/4th East Lancs.
2/7th Lancs. Fusiliers.	2/5th East Lancs.
2/8th Lancs. Fusiliers.	2/9th Manchesters.
3/5th Lancs. Fusiliers (forming)	2/10th Manchesters.
199th Brigade.	
2/5th Manchesters.	
2/6th Manchesters.	
2/7th Manchesters.	
2/8th Manchesters.	

Artillery 330th, 331st, 332nd Brigades were skeleton units without guns.

The Division contained a considerable proportion of "Home Service" men left over from the First Line Battalion. In spite of this obvious source of weakness there was a strong opinion that the move to Crowborough heralded a short period of intensive training prior to our proceeding "Overseas." How far this opinion was justified will be seen in the ensuing chapters.

The inhabitants of Southport gave us an enthusiastic "send off" and the entraining and subsequent journey by troop train to the South of England was a novel and interesting experience.

We left Southport at 8 p.m. on May 19th and reached Crowborough (Jarvis Brook) at 7 a.m. on May 20th; then marched the three miles from the Station to the Camp. The first part of the way was uphill.

At the top the panorama by its sheer beauty took away the little breath we had left. Some twenty miles of rolling country lay before us, terminated by the upward slope of the Sussex Downs with the break of Burling Gap on the left, through which could be seen Beachy Head and the blue of the sea, the whole bathed in the soft lights shed by the early morning's sun. From this point the road dropped rapidly until we turned into the camp on the right. The camp was extraordinarily well laid out on a long stretch of meadow land on one side of a valley with thick woods at the bottom, and a fine belt of pines crowning the crest. The huts were clean and commodious; they were painted green with green roofs to avoid easy detection by aeroplane. This was a reminder that we were now in a Zeppelin area, which received further confirmation when we found that Camp "Standing Orders" instructed us to hide in the woods in the event of an air raid.

The one great drawback to the camp was that on wet days it became like a ploughed field, but, fortunately, at this period of the year it dried quickly.

The Battalion soon settled down to its new quarters, and the time spent at Crowborough was a very merry period of our training. Fresh air, exercise, close comradeship, good food, high spirits, and a keenness for the business in hand, all contributed to a feeling of well-being. The pulse of life beats high and strong when youth and enthusiasm unite to go adventuring.

There was a spice of reality also in our life, for when the noise of the camp was hushed, during the long, calm evenings, it was possible to hear a distant throb in the air: the sound of the guns in Flanders.

On arrival at Crowborough various changes took place in the Battalion. Major F. A. H. Bealey became Second-in-Command, vice Major Ledward, now commanding the 3rd Line, Capt. E. J. Jones became Adjutant, and Lieut. C. W. James—Quartermaster. The following officers from the 12th and 13th (Service) Battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers were attached to us: 2/Lts. R. Farnham, J. S. Barker, C. T. Hammond, T. L. Lovell, and P. H. Taylor. The following were gazetted to us: 2/Lts. H. Stevenson, E. Ormerod, H. B. Silverwood, and J. A. Kay. The "Home Service" men left us at this stage, and we became a Battalion of volunteers for anywhere and anything

Company training started, and we soon entered the throes of specialisation. As time went on, courses of instruction and specialist training became a sore trial to weary and worn Adjutants who were at their wits' end to find a suitable and continuous supply of Officers and N.C.O.'s for courses on Musketry, Machine Gun, Bombing, Trench Digging, Signalling, Physical Training, Bayonet Fighting, etc. This was by no means the end of the matter either, for the system entailed the appointment of permanent Specialist Officers to the Brigade Staff, and also of Battalion Officers for each particular course. These continuous courses of instruction made periodical calls on harassed Company Commanders for N.C.O.'s and men until C.O.'s and Company Commanders wished the whole system at Jericho, as it played the very devil with ordinary routine and training. One branch of the specialist training at Crowborough deserves special mention in this book.

Sergeant-Major Instructor Curley, of the Army Gymnastic Staff, created a real liking for bayonet fighting in all ranks of the Battalion. The amazing agility of this W.O.—and he was no longer a young man—gained him the name of "India Rubber Joe." Before his tour of duty had expired, most of the N.C.O.'s under his charge had wished him far enough and in an unmentionable place; nevertheless, the service he rendered greatly increased the military efficiency of the Unit.

At this time the War Office was compelled by force of circumstances to abandon, for the time being, the idea of sending out the Division as a complete Unit.

The 42nd Division (composed of our 1st line Units) which landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula on May 5th, went straight into action, and by June 5th had suffered casualties of over 4,000 of all ranks. This, combined with the heavy loss sustained by all Units engaged on the Peninsula through disease, reduced the Division to one-half its strength. Reinforcements were urgently required. The 3rd Line Units were not sufficiently advanced in their training to supply them. In these circumstances the War Office decided that the 66th Division must assist in finding the necessary drafts. It was a severe blow to our prospects, but there was no alternative. On June 20th the Division called upon each Battalion to submit the names of 12 officers for service in Gallipoli, and the following officers were detailed and proceeded at once on four days' Final

Leave: Captains Chesney and Sutcliffe, Lieuts. W. D. Shaw, Oswald Cooper, Williams, Collins, W. Taylor, 2/Lts. Molesworth, Fothergill, Leak, Redmond, and Coe.

While this party was away on leave a contest of influence was in progress at the War Office. One party strove for the preservation of the 66th as a complete Division, and the other wished to consider all 2nd Line Units a reserve for the 1st Line.

Eventually a compromise was reached and the draft sent from the 2/6th was composed of five officers: Lieuts. O. Cooper, W. H. Williams, 2/Lts. R. Leak, Redmond, and Coe, with 100 other ranks.

A week later we said farewell to four more officers, when Lieuts. W. D. Shaw and W. Taylor, 2/Lts. E. N. Molesworth and A. S. C. Fothergill left to join the 1st Line in Gallipoli.

August 1st, 1915, will live in the memory of all as a red letter day. It was our first "Minden Day." On August 1st, 1914, we were not Lancashire Fusiliers, but this anniversary in subsequent years saw us Lancashire Fusiliers and even now we cast off on that day our civilian clothes and become again

"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

On that our first Minden Day the supply of glorious red and yellow roses seemed inexhaustible. Every individual sported two in his cap (one either side the cap badge) and the drums of each Battalion, festooned with roses, were a sight ever to be remembered.

The morning was taken up by a Ceremonial Parade of the entire Brigade, followed by an interesting historical address on the significance of the day by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The afternoon was given over to feasting and jollity, which left a confused impression on the mind. The predominant features, of which were liquid refreshments and roses.

In the evening another big draft left for Galipoli: Capt. N. J. Laski with 100 other ranks.

Similar drafts from the other two Brigades of the Division had already left, but those from Units of the Lancashire Fusilier Brigade had been allowed an additional day's respite so that "Minden Day" could be spent amid comrades. The combined draft, some four hundred strong, was due to entrain at Jarvis Brook Station at 12 55 a.m., and from the size of the crowd it seemed as

if the whole Brigade had turned out to see them off. It was a stirring scene in the still hours of a summer night to see the column of khaki figures wearing tropical Topees and in full equipment passing down the peaceful Sussex lanes, and it was good to hear them singing as they swung along in soldierly style; it was fitting, too, that the noise of their passing should bring cottagers to their doors and garden gates to give them a cheer and "God speed" as they passed. They were a fine lot, and we were proud of them. Their departure formed a stirring end to a memorable day.

Immediately after "Minden Day" the greater part of the Battalion left Crowborough for a fortnight's trench digging round Maidstone. The whole of the trench system stretching from Tunbridge Wells through Crowborough and Maidstone to Hastings was part of the second line defences of London. It had recently been redesigned by the Engineers of the 66th Division and to the Infantry had been given the task of digging the new line, the 197th Brigade having the Maidstone sector allotted to them.

A certain number of details were left behind in camp under 2/Lt. C. H. Potter, and this fortunate little party enjoyed a fortnight's holiday without even so much as a single "Brass hat" coming round to "strafe" them.

During August further orders from the War Office were received to supply more drafts for the Dardanelles, and final leave was granted to those chosen, but in each case the order was cancelled owing to the conflict of opinion as to the real purpose of the 2nd Line Divisions.

In the case of some individuals the general public might have been pardoned for thinking that the taking of "Final Leave" had developed into a habit. Captain Chesney, when he was informed on his return from Dublin for the fourth time that he was not "proceeding overseas," vented his annoyance in language both terse and spirited.

During this month we heard of our first casualties: 2/Lt. Ralph Taylor killed, 2/Lt. Leak badly wounded and dying at sea, Lieuts. J. Taylor and O. Cooper and 2/Lts. G. C. Thompson and Redmond wounded. It was a sad list and lent truth to the report current at that time that a subaltern's "life" on Gallipoli averaged out at a week.

The Battalion earned such a reputation as trench

diggers when at Maidstone that in the middle of September six officers and 250 other ranks went off again for a second spell of that delightful occupation—this time to Brighton.

During the time this party were away one of our men—Riley of D Company—was drowned whilst bathing in the New Mill Lake some distance from the camp. Some of the bathing party were rescued by Lieut. Turner, 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers, and Private Rowland Barnes of the Machine Gun Section and D Company. The gallant efforts of the two rescuers were recognised by their being awarded the Medal of the Royal Humane Society.

Early in September the Officers' Mess was enlivened by an invasion of kilts, plaids, trews, and Glengarry caps. Officers from Scotch Battalions being attached to us for duty to replace in part our own Officers now with the 1st Line in Gallipoli; of this number 2/Lts. T. Moffatt, J. R. Cameron, and A. M. Cowan subsequently obtained a transfer to the Battalion and were received as most welcome additions to "the family." During the month six more Officers left us to proceed to the Dardanelles: 2/Lts. H. B. Silverwood, R. Farnham, J. S. Barker, F. S. T. Cooper, with 150 men from the 3rd Line; to be followed a few days later by Lieut J. L. Collins and 2/Lt. A. L. Herridge.

The 1st Line were still in the thick of it and had covered themselves with glory in the capture of "The Vineyard," the only ground taken and held on the Helles Front during the whole of the August fighting. The following were additional casualties amongst the officers we had sent out: Lieuts: W. Taylor, W. D. Shaw, E. N. Molesworth wounded and 2/Lt. A. S. C. Fothergill in a serious condition with dysentery. By this time half the original officers of the Battalion had been through "the mill" in Gallipoli.

On October 20th, 1915, the 197th Brigade marched into billets at Tunbridge Wells for the winter. The 2/5th Battalion billets were in the upper portion of the town on the road on Tonbridge. The officers' quarters were in a large house known as Culverden Castle, and the men's billets were also in large empty houses, as a rule one Company to a house. The billeting arrangements were really most satisfactory, and Tunbridge Wells was a very pleasant place to spend a winter.

About this time a new "return" was called for, known as "Nights in Bed." This proved a stumbling block to Orderly Sergeants, as many can testify. To show the number of men in your Company, how they were occupied, and also how many nights they had each spent in bed was, in the opinion of many, going into detail a little too much. It is recorded that a worried Orderly Sergeant—long before this book was contemplated—once said that if the History of the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers was ever written its title should be "(K)nights in Bed."

In the London Gazette, under date October 26th, the following promotions were gazetted: To be Temporary Captains—C. H. Potter, J. L. Collins, W. H. Prince, J. L. Lee, W. B. McCulloch.

On November 16th the various Battalions in the Brigade were inspected by Major-General Dixon—Inspector General of Infantry. The Battalion went out at an early hour and took up an outpost position in Broadwater Forest. It was snowing heavily. The General did not turn up, and the Battalion eventually marching back was caught at a disadvantage, wet and "fed up" by "the Great One" enroute. No wonder Inspecting Generals were unpopular.

During November we had a further addition of Officers, 2/Lts. T. Robbins, W. E. Moldey, J. H. Johnston, and A. L. Baseley.

We also heard with regret of the death from wounds in Gallipoli of Lieut. G. C. Thompson. He was one of the trio of officers we sent out from Southport, and the last to succumb.

Recruits were now coming in rapidly under the Derby Scheme, and the Battalion was soon up to its war strength. The Japanese rifles were withdrawn and long Lee Enfields and Lewis guns issued to the Battalion. All these changes gave grounds for hope to sanguine souls of at last proceeding overseas.

A new Divisional General was appointed—Major-General C. S. Blomfield, C.B., D.S.O. (of South African fame), in place of Major-General Beckett, who was too old for Foreign Service.

Shortly before Christmas the first of our old comrades back from Gallipoli—Lts. W. D. Shaw and Oswald Cooper—paid an unexpected visit to their old Battalion and received an enthusiastic welcome. The difficulty was

to create the right atmosphere so that we could get them to tell us of the fighting in which 21 officers and 500 men from our Battalion had played a part. However, in the congenial surroundings of the Officers' Mess, we eventually got the story, and it proved one of surpassing interest.

A welcome order from G.O.C. Home Forces authorising six days' Christmas leave brought about that real Christmas feeling.

This history would be incomplete without reference to an incident at Tunbridge Wells which will remain for ever in the memory of the officers of the Unit.

Captain Chesney was promoted to the rank of Major, and this event was celebrated in the usual way at Mess. In addition, the front row of the stalls of the local theatre was booked. As the party proceeded to their seats in the theatre a very tall officer removed the Glengarry of a diminutive subaltern in front and placed it ceremoniously on the projecting arm of the big bass fiddle. The "House" roared with laughter, which was further increased when the incensed fiddler made a terrific cut at the offender, who adroitly avoided it. Apologies immediately followed, and that affair was over, but another was to follow.

The orchestra was in a "cockpit" about three feet lower than the floor level of the stalls and separated from them by a narrow gangway, which was screened off in the usual way by a low curtain. The subaltern took his seat in the front row of the stalls, and whilst bending forward to put his cap under the seat overbalanced, owing to the motive power applied by the officer who sat next to him; he fell through the curtain into the orchestra, his head coming into violent contact with the edge of the big drum, with the result that the orchestra was reduced to a state of temporary chaos and the house buzzed with excitement, whilst an A.P.M. who was present proved to be a veritable wasp. Consternation followed in the morning when the two officers concerned were placed "under arrest" pending investigation. This proved favourable, and the officers resumed duty. After this event the subaltern, a great favourite of the men, was often greeted as he walked along the Battalion when halted on a road or on passing along a trench by the words:

"Who fell thro' t' big drum?"

Little Tich!!

The winter of 1915-1916 was a very severe one and the snowfall was unusually heavy in Tunbridge Wells. On several occasions the Battalion ceased to function as a Military Unit and was loaned to the town authorities for snow shovelling purposes; this added diversity to its record of service.

Towards the end of February we had a visit from 2/Lt. Fothergill. He had been out of hospital a month and looked surprisingly well considering what he had gone through. He was awaiting orders to join the 3rd Line at Codford.

The Mount Ephraim Hotel was chosen to celebrate such a joyous event as this visit, and those who remember its attractions will admit that no more suitable place could have been found.

At the beginning of March we welcomed Capt. Laski (another Gallipoli casualty) at the same place. He was also off to Codford to join the 3rd Line.

On March 13th, 1916, orders were issued for a move to Colchester. The days of snow shovelling and other varied occupations were to be left behind, and we were to move a step higher in the military world. The Advance Party, under Capt. B. W. Shaw, left the same day. The Battalion followed two days later.

We entrained at 11.10 p.m. and arrived at Colchester at 4.40 a.m. the following morning. It must have been a busy time for the railways that night as six Divisions were on the move.

The Barracks lay on the far side of the town and looked very forlorn as we marched into them. How is it that every Unit that leaves a place swears that it is left clean, and every incoming Unit swears that it is found dirty? Later, when we were in Belgium, the writer has vivid recollections of leaving a place clean and having it certified so by his C.O., and the Medical Officer; yet twenty-four hours later he was sent with one officer and twenty men from each Company to clean up billets, and especially the Headquarters Mess—left, according to the note from Division—"disgustingly dirty." The cleaning up party, complete with cleaning tackle, marched from Bray Dunes to St. Idesbalde—which was much more than a Sabbath Day's journey—and reported to the Town Major. He gave the location of the billets to be cleaned, and pooh-poohed the story that

they were not the billets we had occupied, but he was fool enough to put down on paper the billets and H.Q. we had to clean, and when in possession of that document we marched off—not to the billets—but back to Bray Dunes and heard nothing more about the matter.

To resume—On leaving Tunbridge Wells we left behind Capt. H. C. Gill, appointed Assistant Commandant to the Southern Army School of Signalling.

Colchester, since the Roman occupation of Britain, has always been an important military centre. We found the Barracks excellent, but were surprised to find that such an excellent Officers' Mess possessed no bathrooms. If memory serves rightly the men's bathing accommodation was four baths to the Battalion; such a lack of bathing facilities made it difficult for the British soldier to "fight clean." The various blocks of barracks were grouped around an open space called Abbey Fields and were named after famous Indian battles—Meanee, Hyderabad, Sobraon and Goojerat. These were allotted to the Fusilier Brigade as being the senior Brigade in the Division.

Our Battalion was quartered in Meanee and the 2/7th, 2/8th, and 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers respectively occupied the others. The Manchester and East Lancashire Brigades were in hutments a mile or more from the town, also the three Brigades of Artillery. The Divisional Ammunition Column was further afield. The Royal Engineers occupied the permanent Cavalry and Engineer Barracks. The R.A.S.C. had their horse lines in Abbey Fields. The R.A.M.C. were housed in the permanent Barracks, and the Divisional H.Q. and Brigade H.Q. were close together in the upper part of the town adjoining Abbey Fields.

The 66th Division was now part of the Central Force defending the East Coast, and the fact that it was concentrated in a compact area made us realise that we were part of a real Division. At Crowborough we had been accustomed to the feeling of being a Unit of a Brigade, whilst in the early days at Southport our interest had been centred almost entirely in the Battalion.

Shortly after our arrival in Colchester a new Brigadier was appointed—Brigadier-General F. L. Banon, C.B. It was with great regret on both sides that Brigadier-General Garstin, C.M.G., severed his connection with the Brigade

he had done so much to form, but age would not be denied. We do know that he followed our future fortunes with a very real interest.

There were two things in Colchester which brought us a step closer to the realities of war. The first was the stringent regulations with regard to lighting. We were well within the Zeppelin area, and on occasions aircraft could be both heard and seen. In consequence, at night both town and barracks were in complete darkness, and it speaks well for the efficiency of the precautions taken that no bombs were dropped on the town, although in several instances they were dropped a mile or two away. The second thing was known as a "P of V," or Period of Vigilance. This was part of the East Coast Defence Scheme. Each Division in turn became, for a period, a mobile force ready to move at a few hours' notice to any part of the coast in case of an invasion. During "P of V" ordinary field training was cancelled and troops were not allowed to leave barracks. On receipt of the order—"Prepare to Move," G.S. wagons, limbers, mess and medical carts were loaded according to Mobilisation Table, and any surplus left behind to be dealt with by a small rear party.

On the order, "Move," ammunition was served out and the troops were ready to march as directed. Often "P of V's" passed without any order being received, though there might be a practice turnout. Only once was there a "pukka" alarm and spirits ran high. The whole Division turned out in the early hours of a Sunday morning and marched off towards the coast to bivouac for the day outside Clacton. The Germans did not materialise, and after waiting about for a whole day the only thing that broke upon us was a severe thunderstorm, and wet to the skin we returned to barracks.

During the month of May the new Machine Gun Corps was formed, and as a result machine guns were no longer part of the equipment of a Battalion. Divisional and Brigade Machine Gun officers were abolished, and Battalions were eventually armed with the new Lewis Gun. As a result, Capt. J. L. Lee returned to the Battalion and was given command of A Company. About this time the word "gas" first began to be mentioned, and Capt. C. H. Potter was sent off by Brigade to a course on "Anti-Gas Measures," which was held at the Royal Army Medical

College, Millbank. His return marked the commencement of that particular form of annoyance which dogged us with increasing persistence until the end of the war. Gas drills. Gas lectures, Helmet inspections, and the whole annoying paraphernalia of gas defensive warfare now became part of a soldier's normal activities.

May brought a welcome addition to the strength of the Battalion in the person of 2/Lt. A. S. C. Fothergill—"Gallipoli Joe." By some means unknown he managed what no other of our old officers did, to get back to his original Unit.

At the commencement of June, Lt.-Col. Prince left us. He had, and always will have, a very special place in the affection of all members of the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers. He was in truth the father of the Battalion, and the strong feeling of esprit de corps which was always manifested and which now after the lapse of ten years still remains a strong bond between members of the old Battalion was to a large extent due to his personal charm and the care with which he chose his officers.

Our new C.O. was Lt.-Col. W. R. P. Wallace of the Gloucester Regiment, who had seen service in two Egyptian campaigns and the Boer War. He had commanded the 12th Royal Sussex Regiment, and took them out to France, but on account of age he was not allowed to undergo the rigour of a winter campaign. He was a regular and had all a "regular's" traditions and observances behind him. His kindness, tact, and the highly efficient state to which he brought us endeared him to the whole Battalion.

On Saturday, July 15th, 1916, the Court Circular contained the interesting information that His Majesty, accompanied by Viscount French, Sir Arthur Paget, and various other notables, inspected the troops composing the Southern Army. Our connection with this piece of news commenced at 2 p.m. on the Thursday afternoon, when, in company with the rest of the Brigade, we marched out some nine miles to a place called Weeley—about half-way between Colchester and Clacton. We reached there about 5.30 p.m. and bivouacked for the night, which, incidentally, was a very wet one. Next morning we paraded at 9 a.m. and marched some three miles further in the direction of Clacton and lined the one side of the road. After a period of waiting a spasm of excitement passed down the ranks;

we were called to attention and presented arms. A couple of motor scouts came along with small Royal Standards flying from the handlebars of their cycles. After them a dozen cars passed with H.M. the King in the first, and "brass hats" in relative degrees of importance in the remainder. The inspection over, we marched back to Weeley for the night and got back to barracks about 2 p.m. the next day. It was on this inspection that a certain staff officer, interested in the feeding of the troops, approached an officer of the Battalion and stated that he would like to sample some of the food from a particular field kitchen that seemed to be in full working order. The men had finished their meal and the slops had been returned to the "containers" of the field kitchen. Instead of informing the "Brass Hat" the true facts of the case the young officer, scared stiff by the high rank of the other, brought back to his superior a piping hot mess of the stuff from the container, which, to the amusement of all those in the know, was pronounced to be "Damn good."

At the end of July the Battalion was called upon to find a draft for the last time. The Somme battle was in full swing, and trained men were urgently required to replace casualties. One hundred men were asked for from each Battalion in the Division, and, as on previous occasions, the great difficulty was to keep the crowd back. It was during this period when new drafts arrived to take the place of the trained men sent out, that Dr. Russell, proceeding with the medical examination of a batch of new recruits, noticed what he called a unique exhibit. He could not keep the sight to himself and called in a brother officer and asked him to look at No. 3 from the left. The body of this man was wonderfully tattooed from neck to thighs with a "tombstone" design, which read :

In Memory of  
BROTHER BILL,  
Killed  
December 16th, 1915.  
R. I. P.

The cryptic letters R.I.P. were arranged across the pit of the stomach and gave an artistic finish to the whole inscription.

During the summer we fired two musketry courses—one with the Canadian Ross rifle and the other with the short Lee Enfield.

"Minden Day" found us in the middle of a musketry course, and, except for the roses in the caps, passed as an ordinary day.

A new addition to the many varied occupations for officers was now thrust upon us—an officer in charge of messing—who was immediately referred to in the vernacular as O.C. Bones and Dripping. It was not a whole time job. His duties were to inspect the cookhouses, make out the weekly diet sheets, and check quantities and prices, but, above all, he was responsible for supervising the collection of surplus and refuse fats and bones, and the forwarding and sale of them to contractors for the manufacture of munitions. This Bones and Dripping "stunt" was taken up with the greatest enthusiasm by the Higher Commands. Divisional Generals pestered Brigadiers and Brigadiers plagued C.O.'s until every Battalion in the Brigade had a wonderful system of troughs for washing dirty plates, the thick scum in the final one being skimmed off by special duty men and slapped into pots to be added to the precious store of bacon rind, bones, and fat already in the cookhouse. Weekly forms were issued from Brigade Office to be filled in by Battalions showing the amount under each head saved by each Unit, and graphs were drawn out and shown to C.O.'s at the Weekly Brigade Conferences which demonstrated how each Unit stood.

To stand well with Brigade was at this time synonymous with a Battalion being top of the Bones and Dripping return. One Unit reached that high place of honour by taking off the grids to all gulleys round the Battalion cookhouse and scraping out the traps, whilst rumour had it that the Guard in another Battalion had been turned out to chase a dog which had stolen a bone from the cook's store.

The proceeds from the sale of surplus fats went to the Canteen Funds, and it was a poor month when each Battalion did not receive a cheque for £40 or £50. This money was expended by the Officer I/C Messing in extras for the N.C.O.'s and men.

September 14th, 1916, marked the greatest thrill during our stay in Colchester. A Zeppelin (L.33), the largest in the German service, was damaged by shell fire, after a

raid on London which inflicted a large number of casualties. When it arrived over Essex on the return journey it could only be steered in a large circle. The German commander, who was also commodore of the whole attacking Zeppelin fleet, got into communication with Germany by wireless, and received instructions to land and destroy his airship. Before landing, the crew had, by order, thrown overboard every conceivable thing that might have been regarded as a weapon. A magnificent landing was made on the mainland opposite Mersea Island at a remote hamlet known as Little Wigborough, about 10 miles from Colchester. Very little damage was done to the airship, but the commander promptly emptied the petrol tanks and set fire to her. The crew were then formed up and marched out towards the main road to Colchester. On the way they passed the little village Post Office and knocked up the old lady in charge. The commander got her to telephone to the nearest military authority to say he wished to surrender, and to ask for protection as he thought that he and his crew might be lynched by the civilian population. (This information is not hearsay, but was given to the writer by the Second-in-Command of the L.33, Lieut. Ernst Shirlitz, of the Imperial German Navy—then the chief Navigating Officer of the German Zeppelin Fleet.) Before the military arrived, however, a special constable in the neighbourhood blundered into the Germans and they surrendered to him. By this time a Brigade had been dispatched from Colchester and a very wide cordon of troops thrown right round the airship. Every officer who could get leave that Sunday started for Little Wigborough, and after morning service most of the men went also. Many thousand civilians came from Colchester and neighbourhood, and all motorists who could find the necessary petrol seemed to be on the road to Little Wigborough.

About 12.30 p.m. two R.A.S.C. motor lorries entered the Barracks by the Main Gate and proceeded at a good speed to the Detention Barracks. Before the men could muster in force the party of prisoners from the lorries was out of sight and under watch and ward.

On the afternoon of that Sunday a weary Orderly Officer of the 2/6th L.F. was sitting alone in the Mess, as every one else had cleared off to see the Zepp, when the mess waiter ushered in a Staff Officer from the Division

and an officer in Naval uniform. It was not until he heard some mystic formula of "hand over to you the body of one Ernst Shirlitz, an Officer of the German Navy," etc., that the Orderly Officer realised that he was booked for a part in that historical episode, the fate of the L.33. The orders were that the German had to be treated exactly like a British Officer under close arrest, and that on no account must anyone have any communication with him whatever except the officers duly appointed. What a time it was getting a room on the second floor ready for him, finding men for an extra guard and trying to get a key that would lock the door of the room. Fortunately the Battalion carpenter had not gone to Little Wigborough, but when found it was obvious that he had been in the canteen for several hours. However, he was sent round to various doors in the barracks to obtain bolts and eventually the Hun and the Orderly Officer were bolted in the same room by three stout bolts. Then an officer arrived breathless from Brigade and had the Ammunition Magazine opened. He must have thought that there was a host of Germans to be guarded, for he issued 50 rounds per man, posted two men at the door of the room, one in the corridor, one at each door of the Officer's Mess, and one under the window of the room where the German was, facing outwards, and finally one twenty yards away facing inwards.

It was a chilly night when the Hun was captured, or when the military received him, and the love of the British soldiers for souvenirs had even cost the poor chap some of his clothing. He made anxious inquiries about his "Voolen coot" which was interpreted as solicitude on his part for the safety of a woman cook instead of simply being an inquiry after the German equivalent of a "British warm." This incident originated the story which appeared in several British papers at the time to the effect that women were carried on the German Zeppelins. Considering all the extra worry and the veiled insinuations in the most rabid of the Daily and Weekly papers about the way in which this officer was fêted, we were glad to see the last of him.

The ruins of the L.33 were a wonderful sight: the framework was formed of aluminium lattice girders which glittered in the sunlight and looked at a distance like the bones of some prehistoric monster. It was close on 700 feet long and 70 feet in diameter. Fire had destroyed

all the covering ; it was a mass of wreckage in the centre as it had landed over a sunken road and broken its back, but the framework of the nose and stern was intact and produced an overwhelming impression of size.

The 66th Division maintained a continuous guard over the airship until it was completely demolished by experts from the Navy. From actual parts and a complete system of photographs thus obtained the Government was enabled long before the end of the war to build Zepps quite as good as any that Germany could produce.

In spite of the guard, or perhaps with its assistance, souvenir hunters were able to reap a wonderful harvest, and every mess in Colchester had a varied collection until it was made a punishable offence to have any particle of Zeppelin, when these items discreetly disappeared.

There are some now who remember a certain Battalion butcher chopping up a radiator into portable blocks, or Lieut. Stevenson and the Adjutant returning from a visit to the Zepp., in the former officer's car, which was almost hidden under a mass of aluminium girder.

By this time all ranks of the Battalion were fully conversant with the word "Zeppelin," and it is recorded that when Lieut. P. H. Taylor was acting as Orderly Officer he visited a sentry on the Abbey Fields. After having given him a very trying list of questions relative to his duties as a sentry he questioned him as to his attitude towards a Zeppelin. This nonplussed the sentry, and unable to bear the silence any longer, Taylor angrily barked, "Damn it, man, what's your bayonet for?"

During October the hedges in Essex were laden with a tremendous crop of blackberries. The sight occasioned a brain wave in some unknown member of the "Higher Command." A Divisional order was issued which stated that Units were to assist in the conservation of national food supplies and that this national harvest should be gathered by the troops for the purpose of jam making. Units were ordered to indent for the necessary sugar and get on with the job. To conform with this the Battalion indented for and obtained 500lb. of sugar. A day was chosen and the Battalion paraded, minus rifles and equipment ; and headed by the band marched out to attack the blackberries. The day developed into a real picnic ; on the return each company filed past a row of huge tins

placed outside the cookhouse door, and every man emptied into them his contribution of blackberries. The sight of such huge quantities of blackberries quite unnerved the cook.

When Colonel Wallace, attended by the Officer I/C Messing and the Orderly Officer, inspected the cookhouse next day, he found Sergeant Mitchell and his staff surrounded by cauldrons of boiling jam which refused to thicken and remained the consistency of tea. The Colonel was furious at the thought of 500lb. of wasted sugar, and after he had threatened to place the sergeant cook under arrest unless the jam had set by the time of his next visit, he swept out of the cookhouse, followed by the Officer I/C Messing and the Orderly Officer, who were both in a chastened mood, as neither of them had been able to suggest a solution of the problem when called upon. Lieut. Fothergill, however, volunteered to set the jam if given a free hand, and to this the Colonel agreed. Supplied with half the store of gelatine and glucose to be bought in the town of Colchester, Fothergill took charge of the cookhouse and the jam set so thoroughly that when cold it had to be cut out in blocks. It is claimed that it was this incident of the blackberry gathering that caused us to be sent overseas, and that, until that widely read paper "John Bull" discovered us blackberry gathering down in Essex we had been a lost Division of which the War Office could find no trace.

About this time occurred the famous incident of Moldey and the Brigadier.

Moldey was a New Zealander as strong as a horse and hard as an oak. Farmer, sailor, explorer, any adventure suited his temperament. He loved the roving life and the open sky. He left his farm in New Zealand post haste when the war broke out and with three friends started for England to enlist. They came by the quickest route across the Pacific to San Francisco, then via New York to Liverpool, fearing they might miss the war if they took the all sea route. His friends got out to the front quickly and were either killed or wounded, while Moldey, by some strange chance, came to our Battalion and to a Division which seemed fated to stay for ever in England. He fumed and fretted at his fate, and importuned the New Zealand Premier and our own Divisional Commander to be allowed to resign his commission and

join the ranks of the New Zealanders so that he might get out. General Blomfield would not let him go and kept putting him off with the story that the Division was just on the point of going on Active Service. Now Moldey flatly declared to the Adjutant that he would not go on courses of instruction: he wanted to fight, not teach. His name, therefore, was not submitted for quite a long time, but eventually the time came when every officer had been on a course and most on several, except Moldey, and his name had to go down for a course of Musketry at Bisley.

It was the custom of the Brigadier to interview every officer of the Brigade before proceeding on a course, and also on his return. At these interviews the Brigadier would state what was expected from the officer, and in some cases where the officer was known not to be putting his back into his work, to state plainly that he would not get any leave if he did not come back with a satisfactory report.

Moldey, on duty bound, reported to Brigade Office.

The Brigadier: "Mr. Moldey, I understand that you are going to a course of Musketry at Bisley. I expect you to do well and bring back good notes."

Moldey: "My notes will be poor, sir."

The Brigadier: "Why should your notes be poor?"

Moldey: "I'm no stenographer, sir?"

The Brigadier: "No stenographer! I do not understand you."

Moldey: "I do not write with ease, sir."

The Brigadier: "An officer is of little use if he finds difficulty in writing."

Moldey: "I have applied three times to join the ranks of the New Zealanders, sir, but the Divisional Commander would not let me."

At this stage of the interview the Brigadier perceived that he had an exceptional type of man to deal with and proceeded to humour him.

The Brigadier: "Well, anyway, Mr. Moldey, I have no doubt you will do well."

Moldey: "I doubt it, sir. I understand at Bisley they teach you how many times a bullet revolves from the moment the rifle is fired until it leaves the muzzle. I can hit most things I aim at with a rifle, and have been out after big game, but to know how many times my bullet

revolved before it hit anything does not interest me. That sort of information leaves me cold."

The interview then concluded and the Brigadier was left with a very favourable impression of Moldey's character, which increased later when on Active Service.

Christmas, 1916, was another eventful day in the social life of the Battalion. The Colonel and Officers visited the N.C.O.'s and men at dinner and the usual customs were followed. In the evening a Battalion Smoking Concert was held in the canteen, and the officers' wives were the official guests at dinner in the Officers' Mess. After dinner the ladies were taken to the Smoking Concert, and all were greatly amused when Capt. Hammond proceeded to sing his very famous song. It was quite an expensive job getting Hammond up to concert pitch, but it takes a great singer to sing through a copy of Battalion orders, and a still greater pianist to accompany him, but Capt. Shaw was able to do ample justice to the musical part of that "Turn." Moldey and Johnston did a comic turn with the Band, and the instruments suffered very little. It was a good thing we were all able to become a happy family at this time; because very shortly afterwards rumours began to float about to such an extent that we at last realised that we were going out after all. We had for various reasons to part with C.S.M.'s Burgon, Lister, Ellison, and Taylor during our stay at Colchester. These W.O.'s had been responsible, to a considerable extent, for our efficiency as a Unit, and had greatly assisted in the turning of raw material into trained and disciplined soldiers.

In the middle of January, "Divisional Orders" informed us that the Division was under orders for overseas. Major Bealey left us on January 21st in company with other Officers drawn from the Division for a "Cook's" Tour of the front.

At the beginning of February the Inspector General of Infantry, Major-General Egerton, came down and spent three days summing up the Division, and shortly after his departure Final Leave was authorised for the whole of the Division, to be given in two batches. The first from February 11th to February 16th, and the second from February 16th to February 22nd. After this announcement things really began to move. Four officers were chosen—one for each Company. They were given special

leave and sent off as an Advance Party. Moldey from "A" Company, Baseley from "B" Company, Taylor from "D," and Gill (who had rejoined us) from "C." Major Chesney was sent off as O/I/C Divisional Embarking and Entraining Party at Havre, and took with him one officer per Unit of the Division. Twenty-two thousand small box respirators arrived and were issued to all Units. All ranks had to be put through gas in them. Lt.-Col. Wallace, on account of age, could not proceed with us, and so anxious were the Higher Command that we should not depart to France without a C.O. that *two* arrived—Lt.-Col. A. Berry of the 7th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and Major R. N. Arthur of the Royal Fusiliers.

Preparations for departure now developed rapidly—old things were handed in and new ones issued. Equipment and stores were completed and deficiencies made good. Surplus stores were packed up to be forwarded to our Depôt at Rochdale.

News had arrived from an Advance Party that they were in the La Bassée sector.

The final "Mess night" in Colchester will live long in the memory of all those who now survive. Final leave with its affecting memories was over, and the farewells that had been said seemed not only to have been farewell to relatives, home, and friends, but also a general farewell to modes of life, mental outlook and all existing ideas and values founded upon the peaceful English life to which up to that time we had been accustomed. Our future held now that strange attraction that uncharted seas exercise over the spirit of the navigator and the spell that unknown country holds over the explorer. Under these circumstances it was not surprising that excitement ran high and that the revels were carried on well into the night. During the course of the evening one unfortunate incident occurred. The Brigade Gas Officer happened to be in possession of some surplus tubes of lachrymatory gas, and it was suggested to him that the gaiety of the proceedings would be increased if this was suitably distributed where people most did congregate. The idea was taken up with enthusiasm, and the first tube was liberated in the ante room amongst the Bridge players. They beat a hasty retreat, but four stalwarts returned complete with gas masks and completed the rubber. The second tube used was in the Bar with more instantaneous results, as it was accompanied

by "thunder flashes" produced by the Brigade Bombing Officer. Then it was suggested that the Padre, who was supposed to be reading in his room, should not be forgotten. The gas merchant ascended to his room, knocked, and on receiving a polite "Come in," opened the door slightly and disposed of his third tube. He retreated with alacrity, but in good order. The result was surprising, as within a few minutes members of a Confirmation Class which had been assembled in conclave with the Padre—unknown and unsuspected—were clattering down the stairs mopping their eyes and uttering words which it is hoped the Padre did not hear. In the meantime the Padre groped his way to the Adjutant and poured into his ear complaints of a most insufferable outrage. The Adjutant, one of the four Bridge stalwarts, sympathised with the Padre, but said that the offenders could not have known what was going on in the Padre's room or they would not have done the deed. The Padre may take this as a public apology by those who took part in the affair.

The final scene in the drama of the Battalion's training in Colchester was enacted on Abbey Fields on February 22nd, 1917, when the whole Division marched past H.M. the King. It was a very impressive ceremony, and the spectators commented on the fine bearing of the troops and the finished style with which they swung past the saluting base. On this occasion S.M. Benson received the "Long Service Medal" from H.M. the King.

The abbreviation S.M. (Sergeant-Major, of course) was translated, it is said, by Sgt. David Lewis into Sammy Morgan. The name stuck, and it is probable there may be many to-day who never knew him by any other name.

Sergt-Major Benson, one of the old Regulars, was with the Unit until October, 1917. He played a great part in bringing the Battalion to a state of efficiency. He was a keen disciplinarian, and as all the N.C.O.'s found out sooner or later, knew all the moves of the game.

In the early hours of the morning of February 25th, 1917, the Battalion marched out of Meanee Barracks and entrained at Colchester station at 2 15 a.m., arriving at Southampton about 8 a.m. We did not sail until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It was a fine, sunny day, and the time we had still in England passed all too quickly. The Division left England under the command of Major-General the Hon. Sir H. A. Lawrence, K.C.B., who took

over from Major-General Blomfield a few days before. This work would be incomplete without some reference to our new General.

At the commencement of the war, Major Lawrence, who had retired from the Army, rejoined, and in very quick time became Brigadier-General in the 42nd East Lancashire Division, and then Major-General commanding the 52nd (Lowland) Division in Gallipoli.

After the evacuation of Gallipoli he was in charge of the Suez Canal Defences, and defeated the Turks at the Battle of Romani. From the time we arrived in France until General Lawrence left us to proceed to G.H.Q., eventually to become Chief of the General Staff, he filled in all the blanks in our training. It was a common sight to see him in the early morning round the front line trenches with always a cheery word for subaltern or man. His presence at the Division gave us that confidence we needed, and we all tried to live up to the example he set. There are several incidents in connection with his association with the Battalion that are too personal to appear in this book, but the great kindness shown by General Lawrence on these occasions will ever be appreciated by the Officers of the Battalion. No words from such a humble pen as the writer's can ever do justice to General Lawrence as a soldier, patriot, and man. Colonel Burrowes—now Brigadier-General A. R. Burrowes, C.M.G., D.S.O., the G.S.O.I. of the 66th Division, is another officer whose name cannot be omitted. Known at first secretly, then (after the war) openly as "Uncle," he was not only our Uncle, but our Father and Mother. His work with the 66th Division, and, incidentally, the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers, will never be forgotten by all the surviving members of the Division.

We have been told by many General Officers since the war, and it is vouched for by the Officers holding high command in the German forces, that the 66th Division fought exceedingly well. The 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers may not have been better than any other Unit, but it was certainly not any worse, so we take it that what has been said of the 66th Division can also be said of us. The credit for our fighting capabilities is due mainly to the excellent training we received under the eagle eye of General Burrowes; he turned us from civilians into soldiers, and we thank him for it.

The following story, told by Major-General Sir Neill Malcolm, is very characteristic of our G.S.O.I.:

"In the eventful days of March, 1918, near Harbonnières he telephoned to the XIX. Corps and his last message was: 'Machine gun bullets are coming through the window. I think I will close down.'"

List of Officers of the 2/6th Battalion Lancashire-Fusiliers on arrival in France, February 27th, 1917.

Lieut.-Col. A. Berry,  
 Major F. A. H. Bealey,  
 Major R. N. Arthur,  
 Capt. E. J. Jones (Adjutant),  
 Lieut. J. R. Cameron (Assistant Adjutant),  
 Lieut. J. A. Kay (L.G. Officer),  
 Lieut. E. Ormerod (Signals),  
 Lieut. A. M. Cowan (Transport),  
 Lieut. T. L. Lovell (Bombing Officer),  
 Capt. J. R. B. Russell, R.A.M.C.,  
 Lieut. and Q.M. C. W. James.

"A" Company

Capt. J. L. Lee,  
 Capt. C. T. Hammond,  
 2/Lt. W. E. Moldey,  
 2/Lt. J. H. Johnston,  
 2/Lt. H. F. Goldsmith,

"B" Company.

Capt. B. W. Shaw,  
 Capt. C. H. Potter  
     (Brigade Gas Officer),  
 Lieut. A. S. C. Fothergill  
 2/Lt. A. L. Baseley,  
 2/Lt. D. Gray,  
 2/Lt. E. H. Parsons.

"C" Company.

Capt. F. Chesnutt-Chesney,  
 Lieut. H. C. Gill,  
 2/Lt. H. Hewitt,  
 2/Lt. H. Snell,  
 2/Lt. C. Gray,  
 2/Lt. F. L. Pedley,

"D" Company.

Capt. J. Sutcliffe,  
 Capt. W. B. McCulloch  
     (Brigade Bombing Officer),  
 Lieut. W. H. Prince,  
 Lieut. P. H. Taylor,  
 2/Lt. T. Moffatt,  
 2/Lt. H. Stevenson.

## CHAPTER III.

## FRANCE — FESTUBERT.

"Allons enfants de la Patrie  
 La jour de gloire est arrivée,"  
 "Tiddly—om—pom—pom,  
 I don't think, Papa!"

S.S. CONNAUGHT (late of the Holyhead to Dublin service), with the Battalion aboard, left Southampton at 4 p.m. on February 26th, 1917, and dropped down the Solent with a couple of destroyers as escort. The evening was mild and the sea calm. The latter fact caused much delight to those embryo campaigners who, though stout of heart, were not equally strong of stomach. The voyage was entirely uneventful: life belts were served out to all and were worn during the crossing, but except for this fact it might have been a pleasure cruise.

We reached Havre at 4 a.m. the next morning. This proved to be the last passage of the Connaught; she was torpedoed on her return journey when taking back a boat load of "walking" wounded. The submarine "got her" right in the bows before the escort saw it. This particular submarine delayed the arrival of the remainder of the Division for a few days, as the Channel was closed until she had been dealt with satisfactorily. At 8 a.m. we fell in on the Quay and marched off to No. 5 Rest Camp, where we remained for a couple of days. The time spent there was practically at our own disposal. We had a Roll Call Parade and inspection each morning, after which we could get passes and spend our time in the town. We wandered round "with wonder-waking eyes" watching the crowd of French civilians and French and British soldiers and sailors; we stepped in and out of estaminêts, dispatched Field Post Cards, wrote letters home, and changed our money into paper notes, which in turn disappeared with rapidity.

On the evening of February 28th we marched down to the station. On our way we passed a body of German prisoners being marched back from labour on the Docks.

It must be confessed that we rather fancied ourselves and were in the highest of high spirits. It was rather a surprise, therefore, as the two bodies passed each other to hear a German shout, "You bl——y fools." From some points of view perhaps he was right—anyway, it raised a hearty laugh. On arrival at the station we were eventually installed in a French troop train. It was a novelty at the time, but later we got to know the type well, and it seldom varied. It was drawn by an English engine and was made up of a number of closed vans labelled: Hommes 40. Chevaux 12, which had sliding doors at the sides. There was, also, as a rule a dilapidated coach of First Class carriages for officers, and at the end a certain number of open waggons for Field Kitchens, limbers, and other transport vehicles, with a quaint guard's van at the tail of the procession which was provided with a little observation box jutting up above the level of the roof. Into this train we packed and "dossed down" for the night, which was a bitterly cold one. The pace was slow—about six miles an hour—with frequent halts, sometimes of an hour's duration. There was a long halt in the early morning when hot water was obtained from the engine for making tea and shaving. This occurred opposite a little estaminêt which did a roaring early morning trade that day whilst its supplies lasted. All aboard again the train pursued its way across the broad face of France with the doors of the vans open and the troops—or as many as could get near the door—sitting swinging their legs from the steps and discussing things, places, and customs in the inimitable manner of the British Tommy which always remained a subject of rather shocked surprise to other nationalities and was accepted by them as evidence that he was a bit mad.

In the afternoon we slowly skirted Amiens, and our interest was stimulated by the thought that here we were in a part of the country into which the Germans had penetrated in the early days of the war. The noise of gunfire could be clearly heard, and the line of light along the horizon, which rose and fell spasmodically, proclaimed to us the reality of that mysterious belt of country stretching from the North Sea to the Swiss Frontier known as "The Line."

One old lady in control of a level crossing between





Amiens and Doullens seemed to voice the French peasants' attitude towards the war as she replied to our vociferous salutations with the remark, "The English pass and pass, but the war goes on for ever."

After passing St. Pol we settled down for still another night in our train, and in the early hours of the morning of March 2nd we detrained at Thiennes and were met by our advance party, who led us to our billets in Boeseghem. Our immediate interest in life was to get a good sleep, and this was most successfully accomplished. After that we did a route march or two to get our legs in good working order. Off parade we fraternised with the inhabitants and began to make our wants known in that delightful medium of intercourse which we fondly believed to be French and which the inhabitants just as firmly believed to be English.

The rather important town of Aire-sur-Lys was only two kilometres away; it was at this time the Headquarters of the Portuguese Army and the representatives of our oldest ally were much in evidence, both in the streets of the town and the estaminêts, in which, of course, troops of no matter what nationality, congregate. A party of officers visiting Aire found difficulty in obtaining a meal. Eventually a small hotel offered to supply their want. A detachment of Portuguese officers and N.C.O.'s from Headquarters had its Mess in the hotel and was most anxious that our party should sit at the same table. The efforts of one officer to speak Portuguese were even more humorous than was his French on his visit to Le Cateau—"apres le Guerre." It would, indeed, have been a poor war if there had been no estaminêts. Shenstone in his poem written 150 years ago in praise of the English Inn said that in wandering the length and breadth of England he had found "His warmest welcome at an Inn." If it had been his lot to serve in France he would have written a eulogy on the French estaminêt and would have averred that therein he found comfort, warmth, and conviviality, and would have paid a tribute to the memory of Madame and Mademoiselle who served him with such unfailing cheerfulness and devotion. In doing that he would have voiced the sentiments of every soldier who

found in them comfort and relaxation. "A very oasis amid the waste of war."

On March 5th eight officers and 15 other ranks proceeded to the Line so that they might learn at first hand how things were done preparatory to our taking over the sector.

The Battalion marched out of Boeseghem on March 7th, and joining the three other Battalions of the Brigade, marched to billets in Paradis—26 kilometres, a trying march, in full kit. It was our first long march over pavé roads, and we knew it.

At the midday halt orders were issued that all officers, except the second-in-command of Battalions, were to leave the column and proceed to Locon, there to be addressed by their future Corps Commander, Lieut.-General Sir R. C. B. Haking, K.C.B. This meant a detour of some six miles. To mounted officers this was immaterial but to those who were foot slogging in full pack it was a most unexpected addition to the day's work. However, there was no alternative but to obey, and the incident formed an introduction to the gentle art of lorry jumping practised in France by all those who received orders to proceed independently (blessed word) from one spot to another. By one means or other all officers assembled at 4 p.m. to receive the welcome of their Corps Commander. His address was cheery and optimistic. He told us that on his Corps front our troops had established a moral superiority over the Boche, and that he looked to us to keep up this satisfactory state of affairs, and pointed out that the only way to do so was by means of frequent patrols and trench raids; the main point of trench warfare was to make things lively for the other side. In conclusion we were asked to remember that there was no such thing as "No man's land." "No man's land" belonged to us, and the Boche were only there on sufferance.

All this sounded very interesting and reminded one somewhat of the man who owned a dog of which his friends were in perpetual fear. To reassure a particularly timid friend the owner of the dog said, "You needn't be afraid of him; he doesn't bite." To which the timid friend replied, "That's all right. You know he doesn't bite and now I know, but does the dog know?"

Similarly, in spite of all that had been said, we were not quite certain that the Boche knew his place in the

order of creation. Anyway, we left hoping for the best. By devious means of transport we managed to reach Paradis, rejoining the Battalion there shortly before midnight.

The weather had now turned bitterly cold and remained so for several days. There was a heavy fall of snow and the country took on a winterly aspect. We remained in billets at Paradis until March 9th, on which day we marched on to the important old town of Bethune.

The men were accommodated in the old barracks close to the Church, and the officers were billeted in various parts of the town. Bethune at this time was full of troops, and the shops were doing a roaring trade.

We remained in the town about a week, and during this period officers and other ranks proceeded in turn up the line.

It was here that the Battalion found its first "working party" which went out under Lieut. Prince—one platoon from each company—to dig a trench for a buried cable just behind the support line on the Cambrin sector. We were "green" enough to carry tools, and either the lorries to take us up never came or we were at the wrong rendezvous; anyway, we had an eight mile march carrying tools, a night's work, and the march back with the same tools. It was "some" night. Finally a platoon from each company went up into the line and stayed a few days.

During our stay in Bethune we were enlivened by the 5th Divisional Concert Party—"The Whizz Bangs." They gave an excellent show in the Municipal Opera House. Many of the items were topical and parodies on the songs of the day.

"If you were the only Boche in the trench,  
And I had the only bomb"

was a delightful skit on "If you were the only girl in the world." Another one—"They'll never believe me"—was sung by a very dilapidated Tommy who had reported back from leave minus rifle and equipment :

"And when I tell them  
As I'm certainly going to tell them,  
That I lost it on the Somme,  
They'll never believe me."

Poor fellows ; their run was short. We relieved the 5th Division which proceeded to the Arras sector and found severe fighting. The members of the Concert Party rejoined their units and many became casualties.

On March 15th the Battalion marched to Gorre, a village north of the La Bassée-Bethune Canal, and took its place as Battalion in reserve.

The 66th Division was now a unit of the XI. Corps of the 1st Army and held a line some six to seven miles long from La Quinque Rue on the north to the neighbourhood of Vermelles on the south. Our Brigade sector was the northern one from "Canadian orchard" on the north, where we joined some Yorkshire troops (if memory serves aright the 49th Division, who were later relieved by the Portuguese) to the canal on the south, including the remains of the famous battered village of Givenchy.

The Portuguese, with whom we were accustomed to come into contact at the junction on our lines near Quinque Rue, were fond of British jack knives and razors. No. 16 Platoon of "D" Company were, we are given to understand, experts in the art of barter. Many humorous stories have been told about the Portuguese. The Battalion story is this :

During a very heavy bombardment of the Portuguese front line a number of "our gallant and ancient Allies" sought shelter in Cover trench. One who spoke a little English, on being asked to give an account of himself, remarked : "Allemagne bombard—me no brave—b—— it."

It became the habit of all ranks to refer to our Portuguese neighbours as those "pork and beans." This came to the ears of the Portuguese officers, who, ignorant of the fact that British troops seldom conferred a "nickname" except as a term of endearment, protested vigorously to "The Higher Command," with the result that a paragraph appeared one day in "Divisional Orders," which ran somewhat as follows : "It is much regretted that it has become a habit with British troops to refer to their Portuguese allies as 'those pork and beans.' This practice must cease. In future they are to be referred to as 'Our gallant Allies.'"

In depth the Brigade sector was divided into three zones.

- (i) The Front Line trench system held by two Battalions.

- (2) The village line including the remains of Festubert village, Le Plantin village, through Windy Corner to the village of Cuinchy held by the Battalion in support, which found accommodation in the cellars, etc., of the ruined buildings.
- (3) The village of Gorre—wired and entrenched in places, which was garrisoned by the Battalion in reserve.

A Battalion's tour of duty was a week in the Front Line, a week in the Village Line, followed by a second week in the Front Line, and then a week in reserve at Gorre.

The village of Gorre, although only four miles from the Line, was full of civilians who carried on their normal existence in spite of occasional shelling. They also made a little out of the sale of eggs and chips to the troops. The estaminêts did a roaring trade; one had the proud distinction of possessing a piano which was said to have been played by every unit in the British Army, and to judge from its advanced state of decay we should think the claim was a just one.

Gorre, like the majority of French villages, possessed a brewery and a chateau.

The chateau was a most interesting place. In appearance it was the typical French chateau associated with the period of the French Revolution. It was built in the form of a hollow square which enclosed a spacious courtyard. The chateau proper formed one side of the square with the main doorway in the centre of the façade. The opposite side was formed by the stables and a large central archway which was the only entrance to the courtyard; granaries took up the whole of the 1st floor. The other two sides of the building contained the kitchens and storerooms. The chateau belonged to a descendant of Christopher Columbus, and an ancestor of the present owner was honoured by the friendship of Napoleon the Great, who spent a few days there on his return from visiting the great army he had concentrated at Boulogne with a view to invading England.

A fine series of tapestries adorned the walls of the banqueting room representing various episodes in the life of Columbus. It was at this chateau that Lord Roberts inspected the Indian troops shortly before his death. One portion of the chateau grounds was laid out as an Indian

cemetery, and amongst those buried there were some forty who were killed by the bursting of one shell.

There were also buried in the grounds a large number of British dead, and some of our own comrades were destined ere long to lie alongside them.

Both chateau and grounds showed unmistakable marks of war. Hardly a whole pane of glass remained in the windows, which were covered with oiled silk. The grounds were cut to pieces by wheeled transport and pock marked with shell holes.

The owner was away serving as a Colonel in the French cavalry, but a caretaker, Monsieur Auguste Gallet, and a charming daughter, Mademoiselle Marthe, who lived in one small corner of the chateau, looked after the owner's interests and kept an eye on the heavy furniture, tapestries, and other valuable objects, which were too bulky for removal. In addition, he held the key to the well stocked cellar, from which, with the permission of Monsieur le Proprietaire, he produced an occasional bottle for sale at a very reasonable price to those who knew how to approach the subject with discretion.

These two people will always remain in our memories as typical examples of the steadfast soul of "La Belle France." That steadfastness of soul which was beyond all praise and which enabled those dwellers in the stricken areas in patient endurance to tend their fields and live their normal lives, with a spirit upon which the waves of war made less impression than a hungry sea does on a rock-bound coast.

After the war a party of four officers had the happy experience of visiting the chateau and finding Monsieur and Mademoiselle in undisputed possession of the battered wreck of what could just be recognised as the once magnificent building. They had declined to leave it even when the tide of war brought the Germans to its very doorstep in 1918, and when for a whole week they dared not leave the cellars.

On March 16th selected platoons proceeded to the Line for 48 hours experience. They were followed on March 17th by the Second-in-Command, the Company Commanders, Medical Officer, Transport Officer, Quartermaster, and four Company Quartermaster Sergeants. Samuel Johnson held the opinion that, for a thinking man,

knowingly to do any act for the last time, held in its commission a germ of sadness. It seems also to be true that to do something for the first time is accompanied in a similar manner with a sense of excitement.

It is certain that to all the first visit to the Line was an adventurous experiment, and its impressions are worthy of record. It was a short journey to a far country, small in area, and known to us by repute as a land of heroism often crowned by death. Naturally the undertaking inspired awe. We left a normal village and cultivated fields and followed the road through a progressive desolation of pathetically splintered trees, ruined houses and uncultivated fields overgrown with weeds and littered with the debris of war. The last outpost of normal times was at the "Tuning Fork," where a half-ruined estaminêt with a roof of tile and biscuit tin, and windows covered by rotten sacking, kept open door and could still produce a bottle of wine of sorts for those who had the time and inclination to enjoy its hospitality. It is probable that this place held the proud distinction of being the nearest inn to the Line in France. We never found one nearer the Line in all our later travels, and if there had been one we should not have missed it.

From this spot along the "South Tuning Fork," it was only a mile to the village of Le Plantin, but the road was in a wretched state, and it was the easiest thing in the world to get up to your knees in mud.

In the early days at Festubert we were accustomed to wear "gum boots" or trench waders, which were drawn from the "gum boot stores" in Le Plantin village on our way up. A pair of gum boots was not a welcome addition to a Tommy's load, and it was sometimes rather difficult to make the number returned to store tally with the number drawn. On one occasion Capt. Hammond of "A" Company found an excellent way of overcoming this little difficulty. He was calling out the number of pairs of boots to the store keeper as his men handed them in, and was alarmed to see that nearly all his company had passed and the "tale" of boots was not nearly complete. He went on counting: "Fifty-two, fifty-three," then ejaculated, "I'm fed up with this ruddy trench warfare! Fed to the teeth with it!! Sixty-four, sixty-five, sixty-six, and that's about the lot I think!!!"

At Le Plantin the journey above ground finished and a communication trench led you up to the trenches known as the O.B.L. (Old British Line).

The O.B.L. marked the limit of the British advance in the Battles of Festubert and the whole of the surrounding area had seen more actual fierce hand-to-hand fighting than any other area on the British Front; it was not a trench, but a sandbagged breastwork, as the ground was too low and water-logged to allow deep trenches to be made.

Along its whole length there was nothing in the nature of a dug-out. Sandbag shelters with corrugated steel roofs furnished the only accommodation possible. These kept out splinters and a little of the weather, but were no protection at all against a direct hit. A well kept duck board track formed a sort of promenade on the lee side of the breastwork, and this was bordered at intervals with crosses and mounds marking the graves of many who were buried where they fell in the great battles in the Spring of 1915. From the O.B.L. the Front Line was a matter of 500 yards.

Our first experience of the Front Line was anything but a pleasant one. The Germans opposite us had just come from a terrible gruelling on the Somme and the Division we relieved had also been through that blood and mud bath. Consequently both sides took things fairly quietly and reorganised in the meantime.

We arrived at full strength, and the C.R.E. Division, Brigadier-General F. G. Guggisberg, D.S.O., was immediately on the scene with a view to our proceeding at once to strengthen the line.

The winter frosts had played havoc with the breastworks and what the frost spared the German minenwerfer had destroyed. The agony of trying to fill sandbags with clay that persisted in remaining attached to the spade until gently removed by the hand is never to be forgotten.

The Front Line was not a continuous one—the Boche had seen to that. It consisted of three main breastworks. That on the left, part of "Cover trench," was entered by the communication trench called "Shetland Road" which formed the Divisional boundary, and led forward, beyond the main breastwork, to an isolated strong post known as "Canadian Orchard," a post of much discomfort, shelling, and anxiety. Between this left portion of "Cover

trench" and the right the line of parapet was much broken down and battered ; this made communication between the companies holding the left and right of the line a hazardous undertaking owing to sniping activity. On the right Front was another isolated post occupied only by night and called "No. 16 Island." This was one of a series of posts which had once been a continuous Front Line.

Between "No. 16 Island" and the next post, "No. 14 Island," was a "wired" gap covered only by Lewis guns.

Between "No. 14 Island" and the next post "No. 13 Island" was a similar wired gap, and between No. 13 Island" and the main breastwork at "Barnton north" there was a shorter gap. The right of the main breastwork at "Barnton T" marked the right Battalion boundary. "Nos. 14 and 13 Islands" were occupied both by day and night, but could only be visited and relieved by night as they were completely isolated during the day.

To raw troops the journey to these islands as patrols or reliefs was a "perfect nightmare," and our nerves were completely on edge for the first few days.

Sergeant Ingham has vivid recollections of a journey to "No. 16 Island" with the writer, which impressed itself on his memory more than anything else during the war.

Sergeant Ingham of "B" Company was typical of Lancashire. He was somewhat diminutive of stature, but full of vigour, stout of heart, and of unfailing cheerfulness and good humour. One miserable night when it was as black as pitch and raining in torrents we two were groping along a disused trench up to our knees in water. We were seemingly the sole representatives of our side in an evil world with "Fritz" lobbing over "Minnies," apparently for the purpose of our destruction. All at once there was a terrific burst of firing in the distance from the British guns, which up to then had been silent. Ingham slipped off a broken duck board and appeared above the surface of the water clinging to the board as if to a piece of wreckage. His face, lit by the numerous rockets and flares sent up by the enemy, was a picture. As the writer helped him out, he said, "We're all right now, sir, the bl—y British Fleet is coming up to help us."

Gradually the Battalion felt its feet and the trenches began to look more like practice trenches at Donyland. Shelters were constructed for the men ; traverses put in at

the danger spots; new observation posts built, and we began to feel that with the exception of not having been "in a show" we were no longer the novices of a month ago.

The Boche had noticed much more activity in our lines. Low flying 'planes had flown over our Front Lines and seen the immense amount of new work going on, and one night he gave the Front Line a very heavy shelling. Communication with the Front Line was cut off and all rear trenches under an intense bombardment. Our guns opened out in reply. More Boche guns replied, and eventually the whole of the guns in the sector were in action.

In the morning we were severely taken to task by Brigadier-General Banon for the waste of ammunition, but there is no doubt that our guns did a lot of good and opened out many gaps in the enemy's line which we never allowed him to close during the whole of our stay in that sector.

This history—as set out in the preface—is not intended to be a mere chronicle of our doing and wanderings. War had its lighter as well as its serious side.

It was in this sector that Captain Jones and Lieut. Stevenson went out just before dawn as they thought they had heard the clamour of "wild duck." They went out several times but never got any. On taking the Intelligence Officer with them it was discovered that the noises came from mating frogs.

Lieut. Hammond's famous joke on the "Intelligence" of the Battalion and the way it recoiled on himself is too good to be passed over. Hammond, one day, sent a note to the Intelligence Officer enclosing in a sandbag a bright tin canister containing a liquid. The note stated that a shell had burst near "A" Company's H.Q., and the tin canister had been found near by; it was supposed to have been part of the contents of the shell, and to contain some atrocity in the gas line. The note and canister were brought by Lovell, who gave a vivid description of the bursting of the shell and the finding of the canister. The I.O. looked very wise and said it was undoubtedly a new type of gas shell, and that he would have it sent to Division immediately. This did not suit Lovell, who saw trouble ahead. He suggested that the matter should wait until the Brigade Gas Officer

called. The I.O., however, said that the find was too important to leave over and that he must see the Colonel about it at once.

The C.O. stated in very definite terms that the Battalion had something else to do than to play practical jokes, and decided that Lovell and Hammond should be severely strafed.

A note was sent down to Hammond in the afternoon saying that Division considered the matter very important and a staff officer would call and interview him with a view to getting details.

Hammond immediately consulted his Company Commander, who sent him up to the I.O. to make a full confession and see if by any chance there was a way out of the mess. The latter said he would do what he could. In due course the staff officer arrived and went to see Hammond, who, after a bit of prompting, made a full confession. The staff officer waxed very wrath and said that he must report Hammond to the Divisional Commander.

It was some hours before Hammond got to know that the staff officer was a company officer from a neighbouring Unit borrowed for the occasion.

During the very early part of our tenure at Festubert we had with us in charge of one of the parties which brought up the rations L/Cpl. W. Taylor, unfortunately killed in the operations of June 13th, 1917. He was a man who could be relied upon in times of stress and whose observations upon current topics were always worth listening to on account of the sense and humour they contained.

Upon one of his journeys with rations to "Canadian Orchard," during snow and sleet he had passed through water-logged communication trenches with his ration container strapped on his back; he was thoroughly exhausted on arrival, and after being revived with a rum issue, delivered to the N.C.O.'s and men gathered at Company Headquarters his method of ending the war: "It would be short and merry whilst it lasted: I would pack the Front Line trenches with all political notabilities of the war (these he mentioned by name). I would subject them to all the horrors of war, and then I should make myself their ration carrier. Day by day I should come along with the rations to be delivered conditionally. My daily query to the crowd in the trench would be: Any signs of peace to-day? If none

were forthcoming I should not deliver my rations. War would not last long under those conditions."

Our continued labour together with that of the other Battalions in the Brigade gradually put the Front Line into the state of security demanded by the Brigadier. At first, owing to the lack of cover in different parts of the line, we had suffered quite a lot from the activity of enemy snipers. As soon as our rate of building overtook the rate of sinking, due to frost and thaw, our casualties grew less.

Steps had been taken to provide the Battalion with an efficient sniping establishment. A lot of the instruction which had been given to us in England was very much out of date, and very few had seen a telescopic sighted rifle; it is certain that no one had ever handled one.

Lieut. Cameron got things in order, but as Capt. Jones, the Adjutant, took over "D" Company vice Capt. J. Sutcliffe, dangerously wounded by a sniper on April 12th, Lieut. Cameron was appointed Adjutant. Lieut. Fothergill, who had just returned from the 1st Army Sniping School, took his place as Sniping Officer.

Sniping had fallen on such evil days and was now found so necessary that the Battalion snipers remained in the line with the relieving Unit, and only went out of the trenches when the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers were in Brigade Reserve at Gorre. This duplication of the sniping establishment enabled quite a lot of useful work to be done. New observation posts were built looking out on parts of the Boche line that had never been under observation before. Use was also made of the disused house behind Richmond Terrace, the "Support Line" to "Cover trench," and the enemy line kept under continual observation from dawn to dusk. Gradually the loop-holes of the enemy snipers were located and dealt with by our artillery. It was owing to the keenness shown by Sergeant Lucas (killed in action later), and his snipers that our casualties from snipers in May and June became practically nil.

The Lewis gunners, under Lieut. Kay, had plenty of targets given them from the observation posts, and one misty morning they got well into a Boche working party. The reports from two independent observation posts were identical in stating that over thirty of the enemy

were seen to drop, and sixteen bodies could be seen lying out till next morning.

Patrols went out nightly from each Company. On April 7th Lieut. H. Snell, 24th London Regiment, was killed on patrol—our first officer casualty. Lieut. Moldey and 2/Lt. Johnson, "A" Company, did the lion's share of the patrolling.

Moldey has been mentioned in a previous chapter, and his work in the Front Line and No Man's Land fulfilled the high expectations we had of him.

By the time we had done our third tour of duty in the line things ran very smoothly, and the Divisional Commander, Major-General The Hon. Sir H. A. Lawrence, seeing that the whole Division had its "Trench sense," decided to carry our training a step further and let us see the enemy at close quarters.

Lieut.-Col. H. L. Anderton, the 6th West Yorkshire Regiment, had taken over command of the Battalion on April 2nd vice Major R. N. Arthur, 4th London Regiment, who had been in command since March 22nd. Both these officers had seen service, Lieut.-Col. Anderton with his own Battalion in Flanders since early 1915, and Major Arthur in Gallipoli. They were able to give us most valuable advice and direction in the new phase we were entering. The 6th Bavarian (R) Division were opposite us—resting after a frightful hammering on the Somme. Just to keep their hand in they came and cut out some of the Lewis Gun posts along the Divisional front. After that, retribution descended, and raiding became the order of the day.

During our stay in the village line at Windy Corner two companies were in Givenchy and Givenchy keep. Here we had our first gas casualties. Even though we were supposed to be, if anything, overtrained in gas discipline, no opportunity was lost by the Higher Command in seeing that all orders relating to gas were carried out to the very letter. This leads to a story.

A certain Brigadier, a sleuth for discovering any irregularities whatsoever, was touring the Front Line near Givenchy Church. He came upon a man, who, whilst obviously a sentry, was at the same time in "skeleton order" and without a rifle. Scenting a flagrant case of indiscipline, the Brigadier sternly demanded: "What are you, my man?" He received the reply in broad Lanca-

shire: "O'm th' Gas Sentry, sir." This explained the situation as Gas Sentries mounted "In light order without rifles." To the further question, "What are your duties?" the sentry still standing smartly at "attention" replied with a deliberate jerk of his thumb over his right shoulder.

This action drew the attention of the Brigadier to an empty shell case and a short iron bar hanging from the side of the trench. Underneath hung a board on which in rough lettering was the following inscription:

"When the German gas you smell,  
Bang this shell like bl——y hell."

About this time preparations were being made further north for the Messines Battle, and the raids, together with the marking of tracks right across No Man's Land, were intended to make the Germans think that an attack would probably be launched from our sector. This caused men and artillery to be kept opposite to us who were urgently wanted by the enemy elsewhere.

Our casualties for April were: One Officer killed, 2/Lt. Snell; one Officer wounded, 2/Lt. Johnson; 14 other ranks killed, 37 wounded.

Officer reinforcements: 2/Lt. J. B. Gartside, 2/Lt. P. Knowles, 2/Lt. J. E. Clough, 2/Lt. E. Mead, 2/Lt. J. E. S. Dyer. Other ranks 11.

Nothing of interest occurred in May. The weather conditions were excellent, and we put in a large amount of work and laid down a lot of wire. The enemy artillery was less active, and his minenwerfer which paid us quite a lot of attention in April, seemed to have transferred their affections elsewhere. All round the enemy was less active, and we found now that the 6th Bavarian (R) Division had been relieved by the 1st Bavarian (R) Division. We had 37 patrols out during the month, one of which from "A" Company, under 2/Lt. Moldey, was in the enemy lines at Old Man's Corner and the junction of Mackensen Trench for two hours.

The casualties for May were:

Killed, Officers nil; Other Ranks 4.  
Wounded, Officers 2, Other Ranks 10.

Captain J. R. Russell, R.A.M.C., who had been Medical Officer of the Unit since its formation, left on April 21st sick. His place was taken by Capt. J. N. White,





R.A.M.C., 2/1st East Lancs. Field Ambulance. On May 13th Capt. H. A. Higginson, R.A.M.C., was transferred from the R.F.A. to our Unit.

During the month 2/Lt. J. R. Houldsworth, of the 6th (R) Battalion L.F. joined the Unit together with 16 other ranks.

On the 5th June "A" Company (Capt. J. L. Lee) and "D" Company (Capt. E. J. Jones) left the Battalion (then in reserve at Gorre) to proceed to Les Chaudrons for special training with view to a raid.

Sergeant C. Harding of "D" Company, who has been of very great assistance in the compiling of this book, refers to the period at Les Chaudrons :

We were like one great happy family. Our Company Officers were always well disposed towards us, but about this time we did seem fortunate. After parades discipline relaxed and we were at liberty to make the most of our time in our own way. No man who undertook that raid was compelled. Capt. E. Jones, who was in command of the raiding party, intimated that any man who did not care to go could be left behind if he would tell him why he did not wish to go. Needless to say, "D" Company went over like one man. There always existed a good feeling between Capt. Jones and his Company, and his junior officers carried out the lead given to them. There was a close bond at this time, a very dear thing in the throes of war. Upon the night prior to leaving Locon "D" Company's senior N.C.O.'s held a convivial evening in the estaminêt attached to the farm at which we were billeted. Of the seven present three were later buried in Gorre, one was evacuated to England, wounded; another was awarded the M.M. As the war wore on, of the three remaining then untouched, two were wounded and the other one killed.

Lance-Corporal Heap did very noticeable work in the line about this time.

Captain J. L. Lee, M.C., O.C. "A" Company, writes with regard to the above contribution :

"D" Company's work and "D" Company's spirit was not one jot better than "A" Company's, and "A"

Company throughout had a reputation as high, if not higher, than any in the Battalion.

The authors here interpose a few words: "This zeal for the honour of one's own Company is one of the most precious possessions of a good Battalion. We do not think there was a man amongst us who would not uphold the excellence of his own Company or his own Platoon. The old Latin adage: 'Primus inter pares' meets the circumstances."

This training continued until the 9th, when the whole of the Battalion was inspected at Locon by General Sir W. Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

The next day "B" Company (Capt. Gill), and "C" Company (Capt. Chesney) relieved two companies of the 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers in the line at "Cover trench," Barnton North, Central and South, "A" Company (Capt. Lee), and "D" Company (Capt. Jones) relieving the other companies of the 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers in the O.B.L. The official account of the action which followed is given below:

"At daybreak on the 13th June, 'A' and 'D' Companies of the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers, with a detachment of one officer (Lieut. Shorto) and 10 other ranks Royal Engineers, carried through successfully an offensive operation under adverse conditions.

"The enemy expected the raid owing to the necessity some days before of cutting his wire. This wire was 40 feet thick in front of his parapet: the ground between the first and second line trenches was also heavily wired. This wire was effectively cut by the M.T.M., 18 pounders, 4.5 inch and 6 inch Howitzers, and the thanks of the Brigade are due to the artillery and M.T.M. officers especially, as they were in action in exposed positions and constantly under shell fire.

"Our Front Line trenches were heavily barraged during the night of the 12th and 13th June, and gas shells were projected on the communication trench used by the attacking party, who were again subjected to gas shells when formed up in No Man's Land immediately before the assault commenced.

"Despite some of the officers and men being so affected by the gas that they vomited in moving forward across No Man's Land, the attack was made with great

determination, and the enemy trenches entered on a front of 200 yards and penetrated to his support and reserve line. Fighting took place in the Reserve Line, several Bavarians being killed in the advance. The troops remained 51 minutes in the enemy trenches, although heavily counter-attacked—the enemy bombing up his trenches and attacking across the open. The enemy's casualties in killed are estimated at 50, in addition to those killed in the counter-attack.

"The Brigadier congratulates all those who took part in the attack and felt confident that the grit and determination of the Lancashire men would enable them to do their task in a thoroughly workmanlike way.

"The Divisional Commander has already expressed to Lieut.-Col. Anderton and the Brigadier his satisfaction with the way the troops carried out their work, and the Brigadier wishes to thank the officers and men who assisted in the operation—the 430th Field Company R.E., and No. 4 Special Company R.E., the T.M. Stokes Gun and M.G. Teams who carried out their task so well.

"The thanks of the Brigade are due to the Artillery for their preparation beforehand and the effectiveness of their barrage fire.

"Our Allies and Comrades of the Portuguese Expeditionary Force assisted, as three batteries, despite having been in action throughout the night and having suffered casualties co-operated in our barrage with great accuracy and rapidity of fire. The thanks of the Brigadier and O.C. 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers are due to the valuable assistance given by "D" Company 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers, who did everything possible to assist the withdrawal and the wounded in No Man's Land, Lieut. Goddard, the Commander of the Company, losing his life in doing so. Our thanks are due to the Brigades in other parts of the line for their assistance in worrying the enemy and drawing his fire on to their areas.

"It is with great pleasure that the Brigadier publishes the following appreciation of the Corps Commander :

Please direct Brigadier-General Banon, Commanding 197th Brigade, to convey to Lieut.-Col. Anderton my congratulations on the successful raid carried out by his Battalion on the 13th June. In spite of being bombarded with gas shells while form-

ing up before the raid was launched, the raiding party succeeded in reaching its objective, in killing Germans and in capturing a machine gun and destroying emplacements. I would wish my thanks given to Capt. J. L. Lee, who commanded the party after Capt. Jones was killed, and also to all ranks of the 2/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers who took part in the raid.

This order will be read to all men of the Brigade.

(Signed) C. J. GASSON, Captain,

Brigade Major, 197 Infantry Brigade.

15—6—17.

This official statement of our first handgrip with the enemy leaves quite a lot unsaid. Three minutes after zero telephonic communication was established between the captured German front line and the Advanced Battalion H.Q. in "Cover trench." This communication was kept up throughout the raid and reflected great credit on Lieut. Ormerod and his signallers.

Since the war we have had the opportunity to hear a German account of the raid and what happened some hours later.

Seeing an advertisement in the Personal Column of the "Manchester Guardian" asking any man who took part in the raid to communicate with a certain Box Office number, an N.C.O. of the Battalion wrote and later received a reply from Germany from a German N.C.O. This German had in his possession certain photographs and personal belongings of several of our men who were killed in the raid. These he returned, together with information which led to the finding of the graves of five of our men who, up to that time (1924) had been posted as missing.

He also gave his account of the raid, and in his broken English asked: "Why does your officer go to the offensive war with a walking cane?"

This refers to Lieut. Taylor (Indian Taylor), who was killed just as he was about to jump down into the German Reserve Trench.

A most remarkable incident happened after the raid. About twenty minutes after the raiders had returned a German climbed on to the top of his parapet and commenced to beckon to men in our line who were on the

look-out for stragglers. Without orders an officer and N.C.O. walked out into No Man's Land. The N.C.O. spoke German, and a small party of Germans and British met in No Man's Land.

The German said if we would provide the stretchers they would fetch our wounded and dead, the one proviso was that neither side should cross the half-way line between the trenches. Stretchers were obtained and the work commenced. Taylor's body was handed over and several badly wounded men were got in. One of the Germans was quite familiar with Manchester and said he wondered what was on at "the Palace" that week.

In the meantime word had been taken to Advanced Battalion H.Q., and Major Arthur and the Intelligence Officer went to investigate. They saw an amazing sight. The enemy's parapet was lined with men standing on the top of sandbags to get a better view. Orders were immediately given for our men to return, and the incident, which will remain indelibly fixed in each man's mind who saw it, closed.

From what the German N.C.O. wrote in his letter years afterwards it impressed the enemy also.

Private J. Whitehead, "D" Company, remained in No Man's Land throughout the day and returned to our lines at night with useful information.

Private McAteer was left behind when "A" Company withdrew. He was seen between "B" and "C" lines trying to get in a wounded comrade, who died later in the day. The enemy counter-attack passed over him. He lay low until the afternoon and then proceeded cautiously from "B" to "A" line. Finding everything quiet he climbed the enemy parapet and walked back about 6 p.m. to our lines without a shot being fired at him.

One name does not appear in the official record, yet it is a name always to be associated with our doings on the Festubert sector months before the raid.

Lieut. Moldey, the stalwart New Zealander, was the life and soul of all the patrols who went out nightly making the preparations for the raid. In the daytime he fearlessly supplemented the information gained on his nocturnal wanderings by direct observation over the parapet.

He was badly wounded in the raid, and his exertions, after being shot through the lungs, though much appreciated by the men (he refused a stretcher saying he could

walk, but men with shattered legs couldn't) nearly cost him his life.

Moldey was invalided out of the Army and returned to New Zealand. He was a man.

Capt. J. L. Lee and 2/Lt. J. H. Johnson were awarded the M.C. for their work in the raid, and the following N.C.O.'s and men Military Medals:

"A" Company.	"D" Company.
Corp. Barnes T.	Sergt. Bailey W. E.
Private Flux H.	L/Corpl. Pratt J. W. Private Cowell H.

The day following the raid "A" and "D" Companies, together with the detachment of R.E.'s who had taken part in the raid, marched to Locon, where they were inspected by the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, who personally congratulated Lieut.-Col. Anderton on the good work done by the men of his Battalion.

Our casualties from the 1st to the 14th of June were :

Officers.

Capt. E. J. Jones	... ...	Killed
Lieut. P. H. Taylor	... ...	Killed
Capt. C. T. Hammond	... ...	Wounded
2/Lt. W. E. Moldey	... ...	Wounded
2/Lt. T. Moffatt	... ...	Wounded

Other ranks : 10 killed, 57 wounded, 21 missing.

During the month 2/Lt. Knowles rejoined (from hospital), together with 291 other ranks.

The death of Capt. E. J. Jones was a serious loss to the Battalion. He had commanded the raiding Companies with both skill and resource, and was shot through the head when leaving the enemy trenches.

"Edwin" was a born soldier; absolutely fearless; quick to sum up a situation and form a decision; of splendid physique and possessed of abounding spirit. He encountered every new experience with zest and treated it as an adventure. You obtain a "spot light" on the man from his own words describing his Army life: "It's a fine life, boys, and we are working for a good firm." He had played a large part in the corporate life of the Battalion and left an abiding memory.

As soon as possible after the raid the Battalion was relieved by the 15th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and proceeded to Gorre. At 8.30 p.m. on the 19th June the Battalion paraded in front of Gorre chateau; with a last look through the trees on the right, where a good number of their comrades were remaining for ever, they marched away from the Line, all through that beautiful summer night, and arrived at Les Pierrière, near St. Venant, at 5.10 a.m. on the 20th June. The next three days in an area then untouched by war were paradise to men who had been continually in the line since the 19th March.

Our able Quartermaster, Lieut. James, with his usual foresight, had managed to amass a considerable amount of new clothing, and after a delightful rest we marched out, a spick-and-span Unit once more, to another sphere of action.

Reverting to the lighter side of Army life it will not be out of place here to insert two anecdotes which are connected with our stay in the La Bassée sector.

In the early days of May, optimistic rumours were abroad that there would be a quick termination to the war. In the light of later knowledge it is obvious that these rumours had their origin in the expectation that Emperor Carl of Austria would arrange a peace in spite of his German allies.

This optimistic atmosphere found its way into the Front Line trenches and caused Privates H—— and S—— of "B" Company one fine morning to discuss this important subject:

Private H—— : "Seems like as how this job will soon be finished and we'll be getting out our tools again."

Private S—— : "I, that's so, and what was tha afore t' war started?"

Private H—— : "I was a miner, and thou? lad!"

Private S—— : "Oh, I was a bl——y burglar."

H—— remained with us until the end, and as a miner was one of the first to be "demobbed." S—— left us, so we do not know if he was classed, on the conclusion of hostilities, as a "Pivotal" man or as a "one man industry."

Fritz was remarkably methodical in warfare and had developed a habit on certain days of sending over an aeroplane to bomb Bethune. One day three of our 'planes lay in wait for him as he flew back, and bore down upon him

from an altitude. It was a pretty fight to watch. Fritz put on all the speed he knew to try and reach the German lines, but in vain ; down and down he had to dive as the three above drew closer. The 'planes turned and twisted and you could see the flash of their machine guns as they popped off at one another. In spite of all he could do the German was forced down until he was no higher than the tree tops, and finally was driven to ground near a red roofed farm about a mile behind our lines. He landed without mishap, but two of our 'planes crashed in their excitement, each being so anxious to be first to make the capture. However, no one was hurt, and Fritz surrendered with the remark : "Gentlemen, I congratulate you on the way you fight, but I'm d---d if I like the way you land."

## CHAPTER IV

## THE COAST SECTOR.

ON June 24th the Battalion bade a sad farewell to the peaceful countryside and marched to Choques, entraining at 10 30 p.m. for Dunkerque. On arrival at Dunkerque in the early morning of June 25th we proceeded to billets in Rosendael on the eastern outskirts of the city.

We spent a few days of complete rest here—a very pleasant change after four months in a shelled area.

The town of Dunkerque was "out of bounds," but it was an easy matter to obtain a pass to visit it. The town itself was a "bon" place, and there were good hotels where you could get a fine dinner for nine francs or so. When the writer first visited it he struck a "meatless" day, but at the Hotel Chapeau Rouge he was served with soup, two fish courses, vegetable entrée, sweets, cheese, coffee, liqueur, and a bottle of wine, which was not a bad effort considering there was a war on.

And a war was on very close, too, as the town knew to its sorrow. The Cathedral was in ruins and every street had its quota of ruined or derelict shops and houses. In spite of this the town had a teeming population, and the docks especially were scenes of great activity. The most frequent notice displayed was one which bore the ominous word CAVE in large letters and which indicated the proximity of cellar accommodation in case of bombardment. Women and children especially must have had a trying time during those four long years that the terror lasted. The greatest terror of all was the night bombing. On fine nights the German aeroplanes came over in relays, their ostensible objective was the docks, but a bomb is like the gentle rain from Heaven in that it falls alike upon the just and the unjust. On a clear night it was a wonderful sight to see the beams from the Dunkerque searchlights flitting across the sky and interlacing somewhat after the manner of a futurist fantasy. At times they became stationary, and at their point of intersection you saw an object which appeared like a silver butterfly, but which was in reality a German bombing 'plane. Whilst

held by the beams of light the anti-aircraft guns would bark up at it like enraged watch dogs "baying at the moon," and it must be confessed with about the same result.

In addition, long range guns planted shells into the town and German gunboats from Zeebrugge would play an occasional game of "Postman's knock" by slipping out from their lair, pouring a hasty broadside into the town, and scooting back again before the British patrol boats could close in to intercept them.

On July 1st, 1917, we proceeded by barges to Furnes, disembarked, and marched behind the band into Oost Dunkerque. The little village was one mass of troops, and though only a short distance from the Front Line, had so far escaped the ravages of war. On our arrival in the village we were greeted by a salvo of "five nines" by our friend the enemy; the first shells that had been fired into the village since 1914.

Two of the orderly room staff were wounded, and three civilians killed and several wounded, amongst whom were several women.

The day after our arrival we were handed over to the tender mercies of the Royal Engineers of the Division then holding the line. We were at this time the only troops of the 66th Division in the Nieuport sector, the other Units arriving within the next few days.

The Battalion was divided into two parts, one proceeding up the line to Nieuport, the other forming a working party at the Engineers' dump along the road leading to Oost Dunkerque Bains; all in connection with the 257th Tunnelling Company R.E., who were engaged on important tunnelling work at Nieuport.

Officers and men left in billets were instructed to carry on with the ordinary routine, but in view of our experience and adaptability we were fairly conversant with the mechanism and use of Lewis guns, the intricacies of map reading, the employment of the rifle, and the use of box respirators. Carrying out ordinary routine thus really meant lots of time and opportunities for harmless little pleasures, such as bathing and games. Bathing, however, was not without risk, as the nearest bathing point, Coxyde Bains, was under the direct observation of the enemy, and shells were frequently dropped amongst the bathing parties.

As a matter of fact, the extent of the foreshore upon which we were permitted to bathe was very limited. On the east Prince Ruprecht objected to our disporting ourselves within sight of his Army Corps, and on the west, as the British Army was not supplied with bathing costumes, we were forbidden to bathe within view of the Hotel Terlink, the residence in La Panne of her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians.

The French had held the Nieuport sector for three years, and after the conclusion of the very severe fighting in the early months of the war, in which the French Marines covered themselves with glory, the Germans had never attacked again.

The position held was about two miles in length, with a depth of about 1,200 yards opposite Lombartzyde to a strip of sand dune along the east bank of the Yser to the sea. This strip had very little protection in the way of dugouts, and was connected with the west bank by temporary bridges.

When the British relieved the French in this sector a great amount of constructional work was undertaken preparatory to the great attack which was to be made from Messines to the sea. The object of this attack was to liberate Bruges and shut the coast to the German submarine. The enemy raided our Front Line at Lombartzyde on June 20th-21st, and found British in the trenches. That fact, coupled with information he already had obtained about our great concentrations round Ypres, decided him to make an end of this obnoxious bridge head.

He chose the time remarkably well, as the British artillery were not completely in position. For days after our arrival in Oost Dunkerque guns of all calibres had been pushing forward through the little village under the direct observation of several German kite balloons. Great difficulty was found in moving heavy guns through the sand of the dunes, and when the attack came on July 10th our artillery required still another three days to be completely ready.

The bombardment of the British Front Line commenced in the early morning and very soon all communication across the Yser opposite the small stretch of dune was stopped.

About 6 30 p.m. the Germans assaulted, and the only survivors of the 1st Battalion Northamptonshire

Regiment and the 2nd K.R.R.C., together with the numerous technical details of the R.E., were those who were able to swim the Yser that night. It has not been possible to obtain a coherent account of the part played by the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers in the battle, as the main part of the Battalion (4 officers and 500 men) were scattered in the cellars at Nieuport, in which they were tunnelling with the R.E., and fought with whatever body of men they found themselves at the time.

Headquarters of the Unit, with the remaining men, were in billets at Oost Dunkerque. The following is the bald official record of how they fared :

- July 10th. 9 25 a.m.—The enemy began to shell roads and billets in Oost Dunkerque.
- 10 17 a.m.—Gas shells fired into village.
- 10 47 a.m.—Direct hits on men's billets and officers' mess. The men were moved out of the village in small parties.
- 11 15 a.m.—Roads : cross-roads and tracks searched with H.E., gas, and heavy shrapnel. Fragments of enemy shell of all calibres up to 36 cm. being found in the village after the bombardment.
- 1 30 p.m.—Lull in firing.
- 2 30 p.m.—Bombardment recommences and increases in intensity until 7 30 p.m., when it gradually begins to slacken.

The following additional particulars supplied by some of those who were in Oost Dunkerque that day give a little life to the dry bones of the official record.

An officer writes : "On the morning of July 10th we were engrossed in 'the trivial round ; the common task,' to wit Lewis gun, musketry instruction, etc., when the village was heavily bombarded with gas and high explosive shells. Battalion Headquarters and several billets received direct hits, and in consequence we were ordered to clear out of the village. From the comparative safety

of the fields we watched the village being 'blown to hell,' to use the current descriptive phrase. Gas, shrapnel, high explosive, armour piercing shells, and any old thing in the way of projectiles of all sizes and calibres were sent over, destroying the village before our eyes and 'searching' the roads to prevent supplies and reinforcements being moved up to the line. In this latter object the enemy were not successful. It was a fine sight to see the artillery limbers and heavy A.S.C. motor lorries passing along with their supplies. Except for a quickening of the pace, or in the event of a direct hit, shrapnel and high explosive made no difference to them. The artillery drivers sat their horses like statues; (if you can imagine statues with cigarettes or pipes stuck in their mouths), and had not so much as a turn of the head for a bursting shell. Their business was to get on and 'deliver the goods,' which they did with the same equanimity as on less eventful days. Throughout the morning the company field kitchens remained in the village on an open space near the Church and a meal was ready at mid-day for all those who cared to go back for it. This was a fine example of devotion to duty on the part of the company cooks, and deserves permanent record. During the lull in firing about mid-day, I, in company with Captain D. Gray, visited the M.O., Captair. Higginson, who had established his First-Aid Post in a butcher's shop in the village. Whilst we were there a 'Jock' came stumbling in carrying a casualty. The M.O. asked the casualty where he was wounded. 'On the cheek, sir,' was the reply. The M.O. signed to 'the Jock' to drop his burden, and that worthy, somewhat disgruntled to learn that the object of his heroic exertion was merely superficially wounded, let him slide off his back and land with a resounding thud on the tiled floor. This treatment elicited a loud groan from the sufferer. The M.O. continued his examination. 'I see no wound on your cheek, my man,' said he. A tearful voice replied, 'I mean the cheek of my —, sir.'"

An N.C.O. of "D" Company, giving his personal experience, writes :

"There is no need to ask any one of those who were in Oost Dunkerque whether they remember that day. It is especially vivid on account of the extraordinary violence

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1 30 p.m.—Lull in fire.

3 30 p.m.—Bombardment recommences and increases in intensity.

7 30 P.M.—It begins to rain.

The following day additional parties were sent out in Oost Dunkerque to search for the bones of the missing.

An officer of the R.E. says: "On the 10th July we were engaged in the trifling task, to wit levelling the village walls with our bombardment of gas shells. But direct hits, out of the

of the fields we worked the ground to hell, to use the classic metaphor. With shotgun, I got up close, and it would be a long, old thing to go over all you took up, but I will just give some of the more interesting ones, because they are all worth a few words. Some had to do with the people, others with the animals, the others with the weather, and still others with the place or the events of a day. One particular incident that I can't seem to get out of my mind was when I was working with the other boys on the farm, and we were all working hard, sweating, and the sun was high in the sky. We had just finished a long stretch of work, and we were all tired and hot. Suddenly, one of the other boys, who was also working hard, stopped and said, "I'm going to take a break." He then turned and walked away, leaving us alone. We were all surprised by this, as we had never seen him take a break before. We continued to work, but we could feel his absence. After a few moments, he returned, looking exhausted. "I'm sorry," he said, "but I just needed a moment to myself. It's been a long day, and I just needed to clear my head." We all nodded in understanding, and continued to work.

Another time, I was working on a project at the office, and I was feeling very stressed. I had been working on it for hours, and I was getting nowhere. I was about to give up when I saw a small bird perched on a branch outside my window. It was a sparrow, and it was chirping softly. I looked out the window and saw that the sun was setting, casting a warm glow over the city. I suddenly felt a sense of peace wash over me. I took a deep breath and started working again, but this time with a renewed sense of purpose. I finished the project, and I was proud of what I had accomplished. I realized that sometimes, all we need is a moment to ourselves, to clear our heads, and to recharge. It's important to remember that we are all human, and we all have days where we feel overwhelmed. It's okay to take a break, to step away from the stress, and to find a moment of peace. In the end, it's what matters most.

of the shelling. I well remember as a Platoon Sergeant with a liking for method that I had set out on a couple of ground sheets in a derelict school the tea rations of my platoon (as you will understand it was the fulfilling, in the right manner, of these our smaller obligations that gave us so often a pleasure in our work). The enemy artillery quickly made short work of most of the billets in the village, and also included these rations in their list of 'articles to be destroyed.'

"The villagers had in the meantime abandoned all their visible means of subsistence to the tender mercies of the 2/6th Battalion, and it was left to the philosophy and morality of individual members of the Battalion to decide to what extent this opportunity should be utilised. To see a Tommy of your own Platoon on that night leer at you with his hat cocked sideways and smoking a big cigar was most laughable. Long before the Orderly Sergeant made his nightly rounds there was unmistakable evidence that either a 'beer mine' had been found or that some acute form of sickness had affected the usual steady gait of the men. The fact afterwards leaked out that a brewery had been discovered close to the billets, and further, that it was the opinion of all that beer whether good or bad, ought never to be left to chance destruction by shell fire. During the same period, a certain soldier picked from the wreckage of a shop window a bottle of wine, but one of superior rank saw the action and quoted Military Law to such effect that the delinquent was only too glad to replace the bottle and to go on his way to salvage rifles and equipment, the object of his journey. Except for these two there was no one else in the street at the time; great, therefore, was the soldier's surprise to find on his return, after a few minutes' interval, that both superior and bottle had disappeared."

(Bring it in : it must be ours. Authors.)

At 6 30 a.m. on July 11th a message was received that the Battalion was to be ready to proceed up the Line in battle order at an hour's notice. It was not until July 15th that we were able to gather in the scattered parties from Nieuport. The following day at 9 15 p.m. the Battalion proceeded into the Line organised for battle. On the way up we lost our transport. They were caught by shell fire, twelve out of thirteen horses were either killed or gas poisoned. Captain Cowan.

the Transport Officer, was gassed, and only five of his party escaped injury. As a result rations could not be delivered that night, and troops had to exist on "the unexpended portion of the day's rations" until next evening.

We relieved the 2nd Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment, who, needless to say, were very pleased to get out after what they had endured. The trenches were all blown in and blocked in many places. To effect a relief in the dark with gas shells coming over all the time was not found an easy task and took nearly all the night.

There were good dugouts in the sunken road for the men which had not suffered during the battle.

On the 18th the enemy took a violent dislike to Battalion H.Q. and Regimental Aid Post. This had been a noble villa residence before the war, and existed as such until July 10th. The French had used it as a Brigade H.Q., and the cables across the Yser were centred there. The rooms on the ground floor had been filled in with railway rails and concrete, and when the building collapsed on the top of this the cellar made a strong dugout.

Over 400 shells fell within a radius of 30 yards and 20 direct hits with heavy metal were made on Battalion H.Q. Three lots of runners were sent out to find out what was happening, as all the telephone wires were cut. The runners failed to get more than a few yards before being hit. An officer made the attempt, and on reaching the Front Line was greeted with a roar of laughter. Everything was quiet and peaceful there, and they were thoroughly enjoying B.H.Q. getting a strafe.

July 21st, 1922, saw the Battalion get its first introduction to "Mustard Gas." Fortunately we were on the extreme flank of the attack and we had few casualties, but many of the men of the 49th Division, blinded by gas, groped their way into our Lines and were attended at the Regimental Aid Post by Capt. Higginson. We played a minor part in retaliation that followed, for on the 24th July at 1.27 a.m., 1,700 gas drums were projected on the enemy lines opposite by "F" special company R.E. About three months afterwards from information derived from prisoners and other sources we found that this gas projection was responsible for over 1,200 casualties. Our part in the show—a necessary but ignoble one—was carry-

ing up the damn things and receiving the counter-retaliation, which was in the form of the heavy stuff.

The sector we were now holding could be divided into two distinct types of country. The belt bordering on the sea consisted entirely of sand dunes, which, in some instances, rose to considerable heights; whilst inland the country was flat and intersected by numerous water courses.

Two main roads ran parallel to the sea, one along the dunes connecting the numerous little villages and villa residences which had sprung up on this coast since the discovery of its fine bathing facilities; the other connected the old town of Nieuport with the corresponding old towns of the Spanish occupation. The area between the roads was full of gun pits and camps.

The striking feature of the sector was that it had two Fronts to be protected—the land Front along the bank of the Yser, which was the more important, naturally—and the coast line itself, for there was always the possibility, not very remote, that the enemy might make a landing from the sea, not as some might suppose to turn our flank, but with the object of getting right among the gun positions and destroying guns.

As a guard against this danger a system of strong posts and M.G. emplacements, protected by barbed wire entanglements, was set up. The troops manning the posts were not allowed on the foreshore for any purpose. The whole of the sea coast, to a point just east of Coxyde Bains, was under the direct observation of the enemy, and all bathing had to take place west of that point.

The order forbidding movement on the foreshore applied to all ranks. On several occasions it was broken, but the culprits got such a warm reception in the shape of a sharp burst of fire from a Lewis gun that they never transgressed again. One of the offenders was an officer well known at Divisional H.Q. On another occasion a party of Naval Officers who were taking bearings with a view to establishing a station for locating submarines, were taken to task. Mere soldiers were nothing to the Navy—it certainly was not a "silent Navy" that forenoon, but under the threat of being fired into if it still persisted in creating a demonstration on the beach, the party retired to make complaints at the Battalion Orderly Room. It came off





second best, as the C.O. most properly pointed out that etiquette alone required that the party should have presented its credentials to be in the area at all. One company of the Battalion were exceedingly conscientious in carrying out their "Fire Orders," even to the extent of trying to shoot out the light of an officer doing important work at night.

The cellar system of protection at Nieuport was sufficiently remarkable to merit a short description. Both Nieuport and Nieuport Bains were within range of the German field guns, and in consequence reduced to ruins. The substantial buildings, however, possessed excellent cellars. Connecting tunnels were made from one to the other, with the result that a perfect labyrinth of safe shelters and passages was created. The population of this underground town was considerable. During the daytime it remained snug and comfortable below the surface; under the cover of night it emerged from concealment for a strenuous period of activity in the way of trench and road repairs, the construction of strong points, and the carrying of bridging material.

As quickly as the defences were demolished they were repaired.

In some mysterious way certain houses had not been completely wrecked, and one might ascend from the security of a cellar to a beautifully furnished room and find a Headquarters Mess established. It certainly was interesting to move from the semi-darkness of the rabbit warren below into the full daylight of an apartment of this description and gaze through unbroken windows at the sun-kissed sea.

The Front Line dugouts in this sector deserve special comment. They were built either in the railway embankment or the sea wall overlooking the west bank of the Yser, and were excellent specimens of French Military engineering. One contained a piano, and another some very finely carved panelling. As our stay in the sector was spent in making it as uncomfortable as possible for our neighbour across the river we were unable to embellish any of our dugouts in purely Lancastrian style.

A good dugout story has been communicated by Major Chesnutt-Chesney. It is given as sent, but as the writer was an occupant of the dugout "when they chipped pieces out," and one of the pieces weighed about five tons,

he certainly does not see the affair in so humorous a light as the Major.

Battalion H.Q. was located in a very wonderful reinforced concrete dugout twenty or more feet thick, and whenever shells struck the erection, as they frequently did, the place was merely chipped. The position was well known to the enemy, who indulged in target practice on it twice or three times daily without fail. As those of experience will appreciate it is most disagreeable to have 'big ones' falling about one even though supported by the knowledge that all is safe. Indeed, to enter or depart from these quarters was particularly dangerous, and not a few casualties occurred in the process. Near by there was a tap whence water was procured. It is perhaps unnecessary to relate that when water bottles required replenishing the men did not habitually go the long and safe way round, but cut across the exposed and short route to save time. The enemy, as suggested, shelled those H.Q. unmercifully. Whether the 'wind' was unusually high or whether this action of the men did in fact excite extraordinary hostile attention must be left to the reader to decide, but the O.C. companies in the Front Line received the following message: 'The men have been observed crossing the open when they require water, and it is thought that thereby they have drawn hostile artillery fire to the Headquarters dugout. The men must be directed to go round by the proper communication trenches when securing water.' The Major adds: "Such little things kept us alive and amused us though they sometimes caused a break in a friendly game of cards."

On our relief from this sector we found ourselves back in the dunes in a camp called Camp Juniac. It had been inhabited by French native troops, amongst others, and a very useful machine was soon brought up which dealt with such pets—quite small ones—that the natives left behind. In these dune camps we were shelled, bombed, and photographed daily.

On July 30th the Battalion moved from Camp Juniac to Coxyde Bains. The extreme narrowness of the front and the number of troops concentrated there gave ample time for training, as only two Battalions of the Division were in the line at one time. The German attack of July 10th had not caused the preparations for our great attack to be abandoned. Guns were still being placed in

position, and an artillery duel of great magnitude had commenced, which took its daily toll from all Units in the sector. Our part in the projected great attack was to be the crossing of the River Yser after Lombartzyde had been taken by another Division. Boats, rafts, long slabs of cork, in fact, any old thing that would carry an infantry man, his rifle, and ammunition across the Yser, were to be used.

It puzzled us greatly to know what lay behind these immense preparations, and it is easy to be wise after many war secrets have been given away.

The coastal attack was to be a combined Naval and Military operation. Immediately after its relief by the 66th Division, the 1st Division, which had held the front on July 10th, developed (officially) cerebro-spinal meningitis in such a terrible form that the troops were placed behind barbed wire between Calais and Dunkerque. There, secure from prying eyes, they carried out special training in fighting in dune and dyke areas, scrambling up sea walls, in the use of small boats, and similar forms of activity. The scheme was thoroughly thought out in every detail; even tanks were constructed which would climb a sea wall and negotiate the rounded coping stone at the top.

A successful landing of the 1st Division would have placed it right behind the German lines, and the frontal attack by the 66th, 32nd, and 49th Divisions greatly assisted by it. Owing to the atrocious weather, the timetable of the 3rd Battle of Ypres could not be kept, and as the combined offensive of the 1st, 32nd, and 49th, and 66th Divisions could only be successful as part and parcel of a larger and more powerful operation, the attack was postponed, postponed again, and finally abandoned.

During the time the Battalion was in the Coastal Sector of the allied front it was not officially in any general action. Yet the time spent there could not be called—in the language in common use at the time—cushy as from July 1st to the end of August the Battalion had 180 casualties.

It was said by officers of the artillery who had been on the sector that there was a larger concentration of artillery on this front than on any other during the war. For two whole months this area was the scene of a vast artillery duel. Men's names crop up when thinking

of this sector—Baxter, the king of stretcher bearers, who under conditions of the greatest danger evacuated old and infirm civilians from their ruined homes under shell fire. As far as memory serves he was offered the choice of a Military Medal or 10 days' leave. He chose the leave, and was the first man in the Unit to get it.

L/Cpl. Fallowes of "B" Company, a Middleton man, who helped to keep the Yser bridges in repair during heavy shell fire, was a soldier whose sterling work was only brought to light when it was too late for official recognition to be given.

Corporal Robinson of the Officers' Mess, who adapted the art he practised so well as chef in a London club to the inconveniences of the line, and eventually finished active service with 35 wounds from a shell which burst in the Officers' Mess at Oost Dunkerque.

Lord—a company cook—who stuck to his field kitchens through heavy shelling of Oost Dunkerque, only to die of gas poisoning two days later.

Private Venables of "A" Company, who did not believe in shells, and slept in Oost Dunkerque Church mortuary to be near to help the company cooks during the heavy shelling. He discarded his steel helmet, and for comfort wore a bowler hat which he had "borrowed" from some civilian's wardrobe.

Another man who ought to be associated with this sector and other occasions, was Private Shaw, once Company Quartermaster-Sergeant of "C" Company. This "Mr. Shaw," as he was known throughout the Battalion, was with us from Southport until he left the Battalion in the Ypres sector in November, 1917. He reverted from C.Q.M.S. to Private at his own request, as he felt that by so doing he would be better able to forward certain work in which he was interested. He was a man of deep religious convictions and put them into practice. Many insolvent members of the Battalion applied habitually to him for shillings or francs., according to the currency of the country in which they were temporarily located. He was laughed at by some, but respected by many, and he certainly strove above all for the moral good of the Battalion.

Mill hands, colliers, and quarrymen had now come to their own, and many noble deeds were performed of

which it has been impossible to obtain information. A man would be thanked for some stout-hearted effort and he would turn away saying "It's nowt."

It is hoped that any name omitted in this book which some might think ought to have been added is omitted only because it has been impossible to get men to say what they have done. One man who had done very good work did not recollect "doing owt." The only thing that he remembered was the night he called the R.S.M. by his Christian name. Knowing the R.S.M. we can quite understand that incident being ever to the fore in the man's wartime recollections.

Whilst still on the Nieuport sector "Minden Day" arrived again. It was determined that whether in or out of the line something should be done to celebrate it. Gill and Fothergill were deputed by Col. Anderton to visit Dunkerque officially and purchase a new typewriter and a supply of roses. They left Coxyde amid salvoes of Boche shells, and by means of lorry jumping eventually reached the Hotel Chapeau Rouge, and still under instructions from the C.O., verified his statements about the "Chateau Yquem" of that establishment.

About 7 30 a.m. the next morning a terrific explosion outside the Hotel awakened them from their slumbers, and they found the town was being shelled by the long range gun from Leugenboum 27 miles away. (This heavy gun came into action against places we were billeted in on several occasions. In June, Malo-les-Bains, and July, Coxyde and Oost Dunkerque.)

Later in the day, a Sunday, they made the acquaintance of a worthy ironmonger of Dunkerque, from whom they bought cutlery to replace that destroyed in the Mess on July 10th. This worthy Frenchman and his wife supplied the typewriter hunters with an excellent interpreter in the shape of their daughter, who had been at school in England. After visiting shop after shop a typewriter was purchased for £38!! Many were visited in the search for roses, but it was impossible to purchase more than about sixty real ones. The dainty interpreter suggested paper ones, and eventually paper and wire were bought. The party returned to the ironmongers and were initiated into the secrets of making paper roses. This instruction bore fruit and was transmitted to the more

nimble fingered ones of the various companies, with the result that the whole Battalion was decked out with some sort of rose on "Minden Day," 1917.

Extra rations and rum were provided for the men in the evening, and all the officers not on duty assembled after dinner to hold the only concert they ever had in France. A ventriloquist, complete with dolls, was unearthed from one of the companies, an embryo Harry Lauder from another, and a female impersonator, who quite took the Brigade Staff Captain's fancy, from another.

Private Allen, one of the H.Q. batmen, supplied most of the humour unconsciously. A really good fellow, a man of middle age, he forgot for the time being—the war—his rank—everything. He was conscious only of being present at a most convivial gathering, and when the stories began to float round, he suddenly left his position near the food hoist, and said: "I know a better one than that, General," and to the great astonishment of every one present he told it.

Then the General spoke a few words to him, and eventually Allen departed, and arrived back with Drummer McCann, who certainly did *not* sing "A little grey home in the west."

August 10th saw one of the tragedies of the Battalion. We were in billets in the houses on the sea front at Coxyde Bains. Headquarters were entertaining that evening. About 11 p.m. there was a faint whine of a shell—a feeble report—followed by the rasping noise of a gas rattle. Gas shells at that distance behind the front line were unusual.

Several officers rushed out, but some minutes elapsed before they found that the shell had burst in "A" and "B" Company's H.Q. Lieuts. Baseley, Mead, Pedley, Gartside, and Gray were sleeping in the room where it burst. Baseley was killed, Pedley later died of wounds, Mead and Gartside were wounded. Gray was found buried in lath, plaster, and brick, unhurt, but badly shaken. The batmen in the room above had narrow escapes. The shell, a Naval one, had passed through the walls of five houses, and eventually burst in this room.

Deaths in action are expected, but this unhappy shell, the only one that ever fell near these particular billets, caused a deep gloom to fall over the Battalion for several days. Lieut. Baseley was buried in the afternoon in the

little cemetery at Coxyde with full military honours. This was one of the very few occasions on which it was possible, from the very nature of things, to accord the body of one of our comrades a full military funeral, and it left a great impression on our minds.

When the French were in this sector they mounted small 35 m.m. guns at intervals in emplacements on the dunes overlooking the sea. The guns were left in position together with a supply of ammunition. Part of our duty was to man these guns, and it would be interesting to know how many men who served in the Nieuport sector have *not* got one of these 35 m.m. shells in their possession.

The casualties for August were:

Officers: killed 1, died of wounds 1, wounded 2.

Other ranks: killed 7, wounded 29.

Reinforcements: 2/Lt. C. W. Morrow and 2/Lt. J. B. Gartside returned from Hospital. Other ranks 14. During August 2/Lt. J. A. Kay took over the duties of Adjutant from Capt. J. R. Cameron, who was made O.C. "D" Company.

We remained in various parts of the Nieuport sector waiting for the day on which the great combined attack should take place, but on September 24th marched westward to Bray Dunes and relieved the 17th H.L.I. On September 26th and 27th the 66th Division was withdrawn from the Coast sector, and handed it over to the 42nd Division, which was composed of our own 1st Line Units, but, unfortunately, we had very limited opportunities of meeting old friends. This was the only occasion during the war that the 42nd Division and the 66th Division ever met.

Two brothers, one in the 1/6th and the other in the 2/6th, met on the march. They had not seen each other since the commencement of the war. The following conversation (authenticated by C.Q.M.S. Ford) took place between two brothers, Winter by name:

1/6th: "Hello. How art tha?"

2/6th: "Aw'm aul reet. How are thee?"

They held one another's hands but never spoke more, and the Companies marched off again.

On September 27th the Battalion was relieved at Bray Dunes by the 10th Middlesex Regiment, and marched out during the course of the morning. Midday found it waiting by the side of the Dunkerque-Furnes Road con-

tentedly munching haversack rations and awaiting a fleet of motor 'buses which were to take it to the village of Arques near St. Omer.

We regarded this matter of the provision of motor transport as a very touching piece of evidence of the solicitude exercised by the Higher Command for the comfort of the troops committed to their charge.

"Timeo daneaos et dona ferentes."

A modern application of our classical knowledge would have made us wise before, instead of after, the event. However, on subsequent occasions when the Higher Command began to take special interest in our welfare by sending reinforcements, renewing our equipment, replenishing our stores, and, above all, giving us free 'bus rides, we felt that the motives behind these marks of consideration were—shall we say—slightly less altruistic than we had deemed them on the first occasion, and that there was a nasty "sticky" time before us in the near future. Anyhow, we thoroughly enjoyed that particular trip; the day was ideal and we bowled along in fine style, first through the quaint old town of Bernes and then followed the finest part of our journey, the ascent of the hill of Cassel which rises in splendid isolation out of the Flanders plain.

The quaint old Spanish looking town of Cassel lies perched on the top with a view on a clear day right over the whole of the Ypres Salient, and it presented a bustling spectacle as we bumped over its cobbled streets as it was at that time the Headquarters of the 2nd Army.

After the descent of the hill our journey soon drew to a close, and about 5 p.m. we "de-bussed" on the roadside and marched a mile or so to clean and comfortable billets in Arques. The Battalion transport was already there, having started out by road the previous day and halted for the night at Zermeezele. We stayed in Arques from September 27th to October 2nd, and received as reinforcements 2/Lts. V. B. Delaney, G. W. Parker, J. G. Hancock, H. Turner, H. E. Catlow, A. L. Clarke, J. G. Robertson, and 38 other ranks. 2/Lt. Mead returned from hospital.

Our September casualties were :

Officers, nil.

Other ranks, 1 killed, 19 wounded.

During our stay in Arques we practised trench to trench attacks in ideal weather, and on September 28th we participated in a Brigade scheme of attack along with our three sister Battalions. It was a most elaborate affair and well staged, finishing up with a counter-attack delivered by members of "B" teams who lay contentedly behind haystacks until the attacking forces who had borne the heat and burden of the day reached their final objective and commenced to consolidate. Then the "B" teams swept down and caused a temporary excitement until finally beaten off according to plan. After that, of course, the show was over and friend and foe foregathered to learn the Brigadier's "appreciation" of their performance.

A word should be said about the uses of "B" teams. Under the conditions of modern warfare casualties during an attack may be extraordinarily severe. In consequence of this a standing order was issued that when major operations were in prospect all fighting troops taking part in them were to leave behind a certain number of officers and senior N.C.O.'s to facilitate the work of reconstruction on the conclusion of operations. As far as circumstances allowed places on the "B" team followed turn and turn about. The life of the "B" teams during the course of the operations from which they were excluded was a very peaceful one; they passed their days on the fringe of the crowd with no one to bother them until their Unit came out of action.

With regard to attacks it was essential that they should be carried out in accordance with a very definite time-table in which seconds were of vital importance, especially in connection with artillery co-operations. These definite times were stated fully in operation orders from a fixed point known as "Zero," and all particulars for the assembling of troops and the subsequent operations were all given in relation to this chronometric pole star. The actual zero hour was only disclosed at the latest possible moment.

An interesting prelude to all practice attacks was the ceremony of "synchronisation of watches" conducted by the Brigade Major. A junior subaltern was usually detailed for this special duty. He had to meet the Brigade major at an appointed spot at a certain time and then speed back as quickly as the ground would allow with

the correct time to his expectant C.O., who would duly pass it on to his officers.

It is on record that one young Scottish officer to whom had been deputed this special duty, after having traversed a mile or two of rough country to arrive at the rendezvous, astonished the Brigade Major by stating that in his hurry he had forgotten to bring his watch. As this history will probably be read by the rising generation we hesitate to publish the Brigade Major's reply.

Our good days at Arques terminated at the same time as the fine weather, and at 8 15 a.m., October 1st, on a very unpromising day, we left, and marched to the little village of Eecke, which we reached in the afternoon. We left Eecke on October 4th, and parting with our "B" teams on the way, marched into Briel Camp in the village of Winnezele. The weather was very wet and bitterly cold, and our accommodation consisted of tents pitched in a "sea of mud." The change of terrain resulted in our becoming attached to the 2nd Anzac Corps of the 2nd Army.

On the morning of October 5th the Battalion moved out of Briel Camp and was picked up by motor lorries, which took up through Poperinghe to the ruined village of Vlamertinghe. From here the Battalion began one of its most memorable marches along the straight road with its pitiful avenue of splintered tree trunks into the ruins of Ypres—past the gaunt fragments of the Cathedral and the Cloth Hall—out by the Menin Gate, and up the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road. This road, in common with all roads leading east from Ypres at this time when the third Battle of Ypres was at its height, was a unique sight. It was chock-a-block with men and traffic both in flow and in return. Horse, mule, and motor, guns, tractors, and ambulances jostled each other in the mud, whilst we, in full kit, plodded along the centre of the road in single file. We passed Potijze Dump and White Chateau, and proceeded up the slope of the Frezenberg Ridge, along which were massed our batteries of field artillery.

The concentration of guns in this area was very great, and the enemy knew this and had the range, so no more need be said, except that the road as it topped the ridge





was not a place to linger on. As far as the top of the ridge the road with much toil was kept in good repair, but once over you were under direct observation from the Boche on Passchendaele Ridge some four miles away to the north-east.

Before you the road dropped to the Hannebeek and the clusters of pill boxes known collectively as Potsdam ; then it rose slightly again and crossed the line of the Ypres-Roulers railway ; ran through the ruins of Zonnebeke village, rising again to top Broodseinde Ridge which bounded the horizon. All around stretched shell pitted bog whose desolation outran sight. From here onwards the state of the road bore testimony of frequent shelling and to the necessity for haste. The surface was formed of timber baulks bordered on either side by bands of wreckage composed of broken limbers, dead horses, corpses, and the other awful litter of a modern battlefield. This toll of the German shells had been tossed aside in frenzied hurry to allow the living to pass on.

Here was the area which afterwards became known as the Tank Cemetery. Tanks lay in numbers in this desolate void of water and mud in weird attitudes like prehistoric monsters that had nosed down into the mud and perished.

We did not stop long on the top of the Ridge, but continued for a few hundred yards, and branched to the left of the road where we were distributed in shell holes (by companies) in battle formation near a pill box known as Low Farm.

Our Divisional Concert Party in happier days used to sing :

“ Oh! what a life!  
Living in a trench,  
Oh! what a life!  
Fighting for the French.  
We haven’t got a wife  
Or a merry little wench,  
But we’re all very happy  
In the old French trench.”

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Where’s the rum gone?  
I don’t know.

Life might be passable in an "old French trench," but in a Belgian shell hole it was the extremity of discomfort.

We arrived in those shell holes cold and wet through, and, with rain falling almost incessantly, huddled together in them for three days.

The day prior to the attack O.C. "D" Company was called out in the early hours to inspect a startled looking draft of men who had just arrived for their first experience of warfare, and on whose faces was registered strong disapproval of their surroundings. One man in particular attracted attention; he seemed very hunch-backed and his pack mounted to the level of his "tin lid."

Said the O.C. Company: "What have you got in your pack? All your household effects?"

Man: "Beg pardon, sir! It's my ventriloquial doll!!"

It seemed the man was a "Music Hall turn," and finding that he would be broken-hearted if made to dump his stock in trade the O.C. told him if he wanted to be a damn fool and carry it in the attack he could do so. History does not record the fate of the soldier or his unique equipment.

The only protection we cou'd obtain in the shell holes was by stretching waterproof sheets over the top. It was with the greatest difficulty, both on account of the state of the road and the volume of traffic on it, that rations were brought up from our transport lines at Kreuissstraat, a mile or so behind Ypres. Both fire and hot food were almost impossibilities, and the only warmth obtainable was from rum and the animal heat engendered by the crowded state of the shelters. Lieut.-Col. H. L. Anderton was in command, and the O.C. companies were:

"A" Company—2/Lt. J. B. Gartside.

"B" Company—Capt. H. C. Gill.

"C" Company—Capt. F. Chestnutt-Chesney.

"D" Company—Lieut. W. B. McCulloch.

Before dealing with the details of the attack from the Battalion point of view a short account of the operations from the Divisional side will be of interest.

At 5 20 on the afternoon of October 8th, 1917, the 66th (East Lancashire) Division launched an attack as part of a general attack by the 2nd Army, 5th Army, and the French Army of the north.

The 66th Division, as part of the Anzac Corps, had the 2nd Australian Division on its right and the 49th British Division on its left.

The torrential rains of the previous week had turned the solid earth into a sea of mud; rain still fell heavily and a cold wind swept the Flanders plain.

The march was up tape-marked tracks and in single file. It was some three miles to the line of assembly, a distance which in dry weather and under ordinary conditions would have been covered in under three hours. On account of the adverse circumstances the time taken was between twelve and thirteen hours.

Units arrived at the taped line of assembly two hours behind their barrage, which had been timed for 5.30 in the morning of October 9th, and were obliged to push forward without rest.

The first objective was gained and many prisoners were taken. In some places the attack reached its second objective, and to Units of the Division belonged the honour of setting foot in Passchendaele itself, where their dead were found when the village was taken on November 6th.

Heavy shelling, machine gun fire, and the physical impossibility of further forward movement caused the troops to consolidate on the line of the first objective. This was held for two days against all attacks until the Division was relieved during the night of October 11th-12th.

Units then made their way back independently over the same ground, and except for the assistance of daylight, under similar conditions to the advance. The Divisional rendezvous amid the ruins of Ypres was reached by mid-day on October 12th.

### PASSCHENDAELE.

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NIGHT, OCTOBER 8th-9th, 1917.

Night, storm, and war,  
No mercy in the sky:  
The earth was foul,  
And from the hostile East  
A wild wind swept  
Chill as stark fingered Death:  
Whilst rain slashed down  
Upon a corpse strewn swamp.

Burdened with fighting kit,  
Men struggled on;  
Dragging their leaden feet  
Through waste of slime,  
Past shell holes waterlogged,  
Where some were drowned,  
In the slow yellow mud  
Amid contorted dead.

Through crash of shell  
And burst of light,  
Whence ragged metal leapt  
Whipping the air  
That moaned with evil sound ;  
Past bleeding flesh,  
And newly stricken clay,  
Hour after hour  
Up tape-marked tracks,  
With frequent halts,  
Where weariness was pain.  
Throughout that night  
Which horror held in sway,  
With shambling steps—  
Yet jesting at grim fate—  
The files moved on  
To the attack at Dawn.

Oh! Saviour, Christ!  
May they rest light  
In Flanders Fields  
Who passed that night.

## CHAPTER V.

## PASSCHENDAELE.

THE series of prolonged struggles which posterity will know under the name of the Third Battle of Ypres exhibited certain features which are unique in warfare.

One of the Prophets of old enshrined the essential characteristics of armed strife in telling phrases when he wrote :

"For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise  
and with garments rolled in blood."

In the advance on Passchendaele the confused noise was terrific and the very soil itself was soaked in blood, but the overpowering impression carried away in the minds of those who survived was that caused by the mud.

Our barrage fire had been so intense that for the time it had destroyed all organised resistance. There were cases of individual fights and of hand-to-hand encounters which terminated in mutual destruction ; but the majority of the surviving enemy were in a dazed condition and surrendered freely.

If it had been a physical possibility to walk to the final objective that mark would have been reached, but it was not.

Men stumbled on through the slime which at every step engulfed their feet and dragged at their heels as they fell, rose, and staggered on with regular persistency until they were covered with mud from head to foot and looked for all the world like risen corpses. Finally they fell without the strength to rise again, crawled to a shell hole, and that, in military parlance, formed "the limit of their advance." This was the method by which the Battalion formed a line of occupied shell holes on the early morning of October 9th. The whole of the night might have been spent practically in a sleet storm ; the men were unprotected except by their ground sheets which they had wrapped round their shoulders. "D" Company had, how-

ever, found a dump of sandbags and these were given out to the men, who tied a sandbag round each leg above the knee. This helped to keep off the rain and kept their legs dry; it also was an excellent method of getting extra sandbags up to the point where they were very badly needed. (Serving Company Commanders kindly note for future reference.)

Major Chesnutt-Chesney, who commanded the Battalion in the later stages of the action, contributes his personal experiences and observations:

"Men stumbled forward through mud and slime. At every step they sank over the boot tops in sodden soil; not a few sank waist deep in the yawning water-filled shell holes: but they staggered on with that grim persistency which is the outstanding attribute to the average Englishman and the source of wonder to foreign nations. During the advance many fell powerless to rise again and dragged their wearied bodies to the nearest shell hole to secure what protection might be afforded from the falling showers of metal. This was the method by which we reached our objective in the early hours of the 9th October. In our advance we crossed the Broombeek—a stream overswollen by the constant rainfall—almost up to our 'middles' and struggled on through the appalling mud. No greater testimony to the condition, discipline, and determination of the men can be submitted than the manner in which they achieved their object that day."

As strength returned groups got in touch with one another and a line of sorts was formed. During our advance we had been in touch with the East Lancashire Brigade on our left, but after the troops "went to earth," it was found impossible to get in touch with them again, and at 2 o'clock a protective flank was formed to cover the gap. We were in touch at this time with Units of the 2/8th and 3/5th Battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers on our right. The 3/5th and 2/8th Lancashire Fusiliers were holding a line from Defy Crossing, where the Zonnebeke-Passchendaele Road crosses the Ypres-Roulers railway to the pill box called Hillside Farm. Here the 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers joined up with our line which ran from Hillside Farm along the ridge down to the hollow which held Augustus Wood, turning sharply back along the high ground in the direction of the road which ran in the rear of and roughly parallel with our position. The centre of





our line and Battalion H.Q. were situated in the collection of pill boxes called Augustus.

Lieut.-Col. Bates of the 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers had established his H.Q. at a pill box on the left of the railway, slightly to the front of and to the north of Dash Crossing. This pill box was used as Headquarters of the Fighting Line throughout the operations. Throughout the advance the whole area had been subjected to heavy hostile shelling, but owing to the fact that the enemy had no visible targets the casualties were light in comparison to the amount of ammunition expended. Enemy snipers were exceedingly active and caused us heavy loss before we disposed of them.

About three o'clock in the afternoon of October 9th orders were received that a further advance was to be attempted, and this was fixed for 5.15 p.m. About this time a shell fell near our H.Q., killing the Adjutant, Captain Kay, and severely wounding Lieut.-Col. Anderton and Capt. Higginson, R.A.M.C., the Medical Officer. The command of the Battalion devolved upon Capt. Chesnutt-Chesney. Just before the time fixed for our advance the enemy heavily shelled our position and launched a counter-attack, which put a stop to any forward movement on our part. Fortunately their barrage was not quite on our Front Line, and the counter-attack, which started from the direction of Heine House, petered out. The mud was as efficient an obstacle to the enemy in counter-attack as it had been to us in advance. The night passed quietly. To cold, starved men it seemed an eternity of time as they dozed in fitful sleep or "sat patiently and did inly ruminate upon the morning's danger."

There is one experience which testifies to the spirit of that night. It was told by Lieut. Mead, who was mortally wounded during the 5th Army Retreat the following year. He and some five or six of our men were in occupation of a shell hole. There was also with them an officer of the Manchesters badly wounded, who died shortly afterwards, and his body was covered with a ground sheet. During the night Mead dozed, and whilst he slept some one, in the hope of extra warmth, removed the ground sheet from the corpse. Mead, on waking, turned and saw opposite to him in the darkness of the night, the phosphorescent outline of the skull and hands of the dead

officer. He used to swear to the truth of this most emphatically, most probably it was hallucination, as that night we were all in an abnormal state.

For days our experiences and exertions, both mental and physical, had been unnatural. From October 5th we had lived and slept when possible in water-logged shell holes in atrocious weather. If Castor and Pollux or the Archers of Agincourt or the Angel of Mons had appeared we should not have thought it strange, and if they had all "reported for duty" together we should hardly have expressed surprise. We were in the realm of the unnatural which may differ only in degree and not in kind from the supernatural. But morning came, and with it the shadows flew away.

The following day, October 10th, was uneventful. Our line held and was consolidated. The enemy shelled and many hostile 'planes came over to discover our positions.

This record would be incomplete without a description of the railway cutting between Dash and Defy Crossings. When speaking of roads, woods, and railways it should be borne in mind that we are speaking of features which were once roads, woods, and railways before the whole surface area had been reduced to pulp.

The railway cutting, by simple reason of its mass, remained, and the railway track could be traced by the twisted metals and broken sleepers: the cutting formed a concealed approach to our Front Line and also provided a conspicuous target for the German guns. These two facts caused it to become a shambles. In it the dead lay in heaps, and each time you passed you found increased carnage. The cutting had deep dugouts constructed in the sides. Most had been blown in, but one remained, and became an Aid Post.

The casualties, however, were so numerous that often loaded stretchers had to remain outside and the wounded take the risk of further mutilation or death. Walking wounded were at least happy in the knowledge that they could make some shift to cover the intervening mile or so of shell holes, and with luck reach the firmness and comparative safety of the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road. The badly wounded in some cases lay in a shell hole or behind a pill box for days with thirst and pain as their only attendants until the stretcher bearers

found them, and then, after receiving medical attention, they would have to endure the hours of man handling required to get them over the sea of mud to the road. The stretcher bearers worked like galley slaves, and by almost superhuman efforts got all our wounded back to safety. Private Baxter received the Military Medal for his great work in this connection. In the period of time which has elapsed between the battle and the writing of this history names have been forgotten, but the deeds remain, and the grateful thanks of all ranks of the Battalion are given to that band of noble men who, with Baxter at their head, did such sterling work on this and all other occasions their services were needed.

Our troops were relieved by the Australians during the night of October 10th-11th, and in small independent parties made their way back to the assembly point in the grounds of the ruined Asylum at Ypres. Here by midday the survivors had collected. The arrangements were excellent. As each weary warrior staggered in he was directed to that part of the grounds where he found the other surviving members of his company assembled round the Company Field Kitchen from which he was supplied with the finest breakfast that could be placed before a hungry man: Hot tea, porridge, beans, and bacon, with a second helping for any who wanted it. The day was warm and sunny, and afterwards we lay down and smoked and welcomed once again old friends.

Peace after war,  
Port after stormy seas,  
Ease after toil,  
Rest after strife,  
Doth greatly please.

Our casualties during the fighting had been:

#### OFFICERS KILLED:

Capt. and Adjutant J. A. Kay.  
Lieut. H. Stevenson.  
2/Lt. J. E. S. Dyer.  
2/Lt. G. W. Parker.

## WOUNDED :

Lieut.-Col. H. Lyon Anderton, T.D.  
 Capt. H. A. Higginson (R.A.M.C.).  
 Lieut. W. B. McCulloch.  
 Lieut. T. Holdsworth.  
 2/Lt. H. E. Catlow.  
 2/Lt. J. G. Hancock.  
 2/Lt. H. Turner.

Other Ranks : Killed 30 ; Wounded 181 ; Missing 18.

In Capt. Kay the Battalion lost a very capable officer and a really good fellow. He had been with the Battalion in its early days. Just before he was hit he was talking to a brother officer who was inclined to look very much on the black side of the day's doings. He listened attentively to the tale of woe, and then burst out laughing, and said : "Have a cigarette, old chap."

Sergeant Harding writes : "At about 10 30 on the morning of the 9th October Capt. Kay asked me for certain information which entailed a statement of distances. At this time bullets and shells were searching the area. We were out in the open, yet this officer found time and inclination to discuss 'distance judging,' a subject he was greatly interested in. What I wish to bring out is the apparently imperturbable calm of the man."

Lieut.-Col. Anderton was appointed to command the Battalion soon after our arrival in France. His vigour and business-like ability impressed the whole of the Battalion. We were sorry to lose him, but his wounds were of so severe a nature that he was unable to return to France again.

Capt. Higginson, R.A.M.C., had done yeoman service during the time he had been with the Battalion. Many men who will read this book owe their life to the conscientious efforts of this popular Medical Officer.

It seems fitting to terminate this account of our struggle at Passchendaele with the opinion which an independent observer formed of our conduct. Sir Philip Gibbs wrote in his dispatch bearing date October 10th, 1917 :

The brunt of the fighting fell yesterday in the centre upon the troops of North Country England,

the hard, tough men of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and it was Lancashire's day especially because of those Territorial Battalions of the Manchesters, East Lancashires, and Lancashire Fusiliers, with other comrades of the 66th Division. The night march of these men who went up to attack at dawn seems to me, who has written many records of brave acts during three years of war, one of the most heroic episodes in all this time. It took eleven hours for these Lancashire men to get up to their support line, and then, worn out with fatigue that was a physical pain, wet to the skin, cold as death, hungry, and all clotted about with mud, they lay in the water of shell holes for a little while until their officers said: "Our turn, boys," and then they went forward through heavy fire, and over the same kind of ground, and fought the enemy with his machine guns and beat him—until they lay outside their last objective, and kept off counter-attacks with a few machine guns that still remained unclogged and rifles that somehow they had kept dry. Nothing better than this has been done, and Lancashire should thrill to the tale of it because her sons were its heroes.

Towards the close of the afternoon of October 11th the Battalion fell in and marched, or rather stumbled, out of the Asylum grounds, a mile or so in the direction of Vlamertinghe to a point where we were picked up by motor buses which conveyed us back to "Briel" Camp, Winnezele, whence we started on our adventures less than a week ago. Here we made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit and remained until October 20th. The time was spent in rest, reorganisation, and re-equipment, combined with a certain amount of light training.

Major W. Wike (3/5th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers) took over command of the Battalion, with Major R. N. Arthur (2nd in command). Capt. J. R. Cameron was appointed Adjutant.

Before proceeding into a "show," any deficiency in equipment was a nightmare to company commander and private soldier alike. Applications for an issue of an iron ration, a Lewis gun, or any of the thousand and one material possessions required on active service owing to the intricacies of modern warfare, were met by the issuing

authority in the spirit which a miser exhibits towards a loan to a spendthrift nephew, and negotiations were carried through with an atmosphere charged with suspicion. But circumstances alter cases, and after a "show" any transaction of this nature was carried out in a generous atmosphere; the miser became the benevolent uncle, and if questions were asked as to how or why such and such a thing was missing the answer "destroyed by shell fire" furnished an all embracing explanation.

At this particular time a Company Commander indented for 80 clasp knives to make good the deficiency occasioned during the course of months by the gift of these articles to French civilians. He stated as reason for the application that the articles had been "destroyed by shell fire." This application brought forth from the authority concerned the written rejoinder: "It is presumed the articles in question were not actually on the person of the owners when destroyed." It speaks volumes for the atmosphere of confidence which then existed that this matter was not pressed to its logical conclusion and that the clasp knives were actually issued without further comment.

On October 14th (Sunday) the Divisional Chaplain held services both in the morning and evening at the village schools. Attendance was entirely voluntary, and on both occasions the building was crowded and the spirit evinced was of a nature not found at a "Parade" service.

The Battalion, now rested, left Winnezeele at 10 30 a.m. on October 20th and marched to billets at Coin Perdu, the Division going into Army Reserve from that date. During the stay at Coin Perdu the men were billeted in a deserted monastery and the officers at farms scattered over the straggling hamlet. The weather for the most part was fine, the country round well wooded and undulating, and training proceeded pleasantly.

The weather changed on the 25th, and on the 27th in the drenching rain we moved once more to fresh billets in the village of Campagne, a few miles away. Here training was continued as far as the weather conditions permitted.

At this time leave began to come through, and all had visions of seeing home again in the near future.

Two interesting events occurred during our stay in Campagne. The first was on October 29th when the Commander in Chief of the British Armies in France and

Flanders, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, inspected the Division. We were informed afterwards that he was much pleased with our recent performance and so struck with our present appearance that before long we should be given occupation suitable to our mettle—or words to that effect.

Naturally, inspecting Generals invariably presuppose that troops in reserve are burning for the fray and that the only reward of service is to be at it once again. War can only be waged upon this thesis. All the same, there is a certain element of humour in the supposition. What would have happened on the occasion of inspections if a General obsessed with an opposite idea had said: "This Division has done well and as a reward for its service, and as a tribute to its efficiency, I will see that it is placed for three months on Lines of Communication." It is probable that ranks would have been broken and that strong men would have stooped to kiss his stirrup leather with broken cries of "God bless you, Mr. Copperfield," but this is a fantasy.

The second event occurred on October 31st, when, after a Brigade scheme of attack had been carried out, Major-General Lawrence, G.O.C. 66th Division, presented ribbons to those of the 197th Brigade who had won honours in the recent operations.

The allocations to our Battalion were

Capt. C. H. Potter ... ...	Military Cross
Sgt. W. Cryer ... ...	Dist. Conduct Medal.
Pte. W. G. Upton ... ...	Dist. Conduct Medal.
Corp. F. H. Skelton ...	Dist. Conduct Medal.
Sgt. A. Stout ... ...	Military Medal.
Sgt. W. T. Smith ... ...	Military Medal.
Sgt. F. Berry ... ...	Military Medal.
Act./Corp. R. Dixon ...	Military Medal.
Corp. J. Gurnutt ...	Military Medal.
Pte. A. Jackson ...	Military Medal.
Pte. H. Baxter ...	Military Medal.
Pte. J. Dolan ...	Military Medal.
L/Cpl. W. Fallows ...	Military Medal.
C Q.M.S. A. Hardman ...	Military Medal.
Sgt. F. Leach ... ...	Military Medal.
Pte. J. Swallow ...	Military Medal.
Pte. J. B. Venables ...	Military Medal.

Mentioned in Despatches, 7—11—17:

Major W. Wike,  
 2/Lt. W. E. Moldey,  
 2/Lt. A. L. Baseley,  
 Private H. Baxter,  
 L/Sgt. H. Taylor.

Capt. C. H. Potter, during our sojourn on the Coast Sector, had been in command of the XV. Corps Gas School. When the Division left that Corps he rejoined his Battalion and during the night October 9th/10th was appointed to command a party taking up water and ammunition to the 197th Brigade. He was successful in delivering these when they were urgently needed, and was able to obtain valuable information when the situation, owing to the mixture of Units, was by no means clear.

During October we received as reinforcements : 2/Lt. H. F. Goldsmith, T. P. Miller, A. McLarty, A. Dowson, A. Inglis, J. E. F. Stanley, J. D. A. Bell, A. F. Stoker, F. Smith, J. B. McCabe, J. N. Robinson, E. R. Curtis, G. Chatfield, and 166 other ranks. The total strength of the Battalion at the end of the month was 42 officers and 742 other ranks.

Our period in Army Reserve now terminated, and on November 8th we marched out to the village of Ebblinghem, where we entrained, and after the usual slow journey, detrained at Abeele station. We then moved to Zevcotent near Reninghelste and spent the night in a hutment camp. The next morning saw us marching through Ypres to Sexton House, situated between the Ypres-Zonnebeke Road on the north, and Polygon wood on the south. Accommodation of sorts was found in pill boxes and dug-outs, and we passed a most uncomfortable night.

The next day the 197th Brigade relieved the 1st Australian Brigade in the line on the front Broodseinde—Tibor. Our Battalion was Brigade Reserve, and relieved the 4th Australian Battalion. Headquarters were in Anzac House, and companies had accommodation allotted to them in pill box or dugouts as near by as possible. On November 14th the Battalion relieved the 2/8th Lancashire Fusiliers in the right sector of the front, which consisted of 14 posts. "D" and "B" Companies were in the line, "C" Company in support, and "A" Company in

reserve. The Battalion Headquarters were in Moulin Farm.

On November 16th company relief took place, "D" dropping back to support and "B" to reserve.

The line consisted of a number of posts in shell holes mostly filled with water. It was a most difficult matter for the officer on duty to locate these posts even in daylight without the use of a "guide wire." Work was commenced at once to make these shell holes more habitable. Pumps were brought up and manned with enthusiasm as every gallon drawn seeped slowly away down the slope towards the hostile posts. On the completion of this task wire was put out in front of the occupied shell holes, and these were gradually linked up into groups. Movement in this part of the line by day was dangerous, and in some of the posts fatal.

The 197th Brigade were relieved by the 198th Brigade on November 19th. We handed over to the 2/5th East Lancs., and marched back through the ever present mud to quarters in the ruined Infantry Barracks at Ypres. During the tour of duty in the line conditions had been most unpleasant. The weather was atrocious; the shelling heavy, with much more gas than usual. Mud, cold, and general discomfort make war in winter unpopular with men of normal tastes.

Our casualties from November 14th-November 19th were :

Officer : Nil.

Other Ranks : 12 killed, 53 wounded.

Amongst the killed was Sergeant David Lewis. He had been with the Unit since its formation, and owing to his skill as a craftsman made an excellent pioneer sergeant. He was well over the age usually associated with active military service such as we were experiencing, and he lost his life when taking duty for a friend who did not feel well enough to do it.

Several changes in the officers of the Battalion had taken place since October. Capt. A. S. C. Fothergill left for England to report at the War Office for special duty. Major F. A. H. Bealey was appointed O.C. Divisional Reinforcement Camp, with Capt. H. C. Gill as chief instructional officer. Captain L. A. Dingley, R.A.M.C., relieved Capt. R. E. Sutcliffe, R.A.M.C., who had been

attached to us after Capt. Higginson, R.A.M.C., was wounded.

November 20th saw the Battalion in the Canal area. We stayed there in huts for two nights, and on November 22nd marched to Berthen. On November 23rd we marched out of Berthen and were picked up by buses which took us to the village of Bavenchove behind the hill of Cassel. Here ideal billets were awaiting us in barn, farmhouse, and estaminêt. We were in high fettle as it was known that we were dumped here for six weeks' "Divisional Rest," which would see us well over Christmas.

During the stay at Bavenchove courses and classes were the order of the day. Few of the old N.C.O.'s were left and new ones had to be trained and given a chance of handling their men.

It was a great relief to be away from the strain of the front line and to feel that we were no longer shaking hands with death. Life could be counted now in weeks instead of hours. Such leaven soon raised a Battalion of the cheeriest souls that ever rested behind the lines in Flanders. We soon got "en rapport" with the civilian population and made remarkable progress in picking up the language of the country.

The following officers joined during December: 2/Lts. T. Sommerville, W. A. Benson, B. Snowdon. Other ranks 10. Our strength at the end of the year was: Officers 44, Other ranks 724.

## CHAPTER VI.

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THE SALIENT. WINTER, 1917.

If you want to find the private,  
I know where he is,  
I know where he is,  
He's up to his knees in mud.

IN the course of our narrative we have reached the commencement of the year 1918—that critical year which was to see the end of a war which had already lasted so long that it seemed interminable. General Hindenburg in one of his orations stated a vital truth when he said that victory would eventually go, in this war of exhaustion, to the side whose nerve was the strongest. Which this side was has now received historic proof. At the beginning of the year the Central Powers were apparently in a strong position which might enable them to win the final victory. Russia was down and out and troops from that theatre of war could be transferred to the Western Front in numbers which gave a preponderance of 4 to 1 in favour of the attackers. In addition, Italy had been forced back to the gates of Venice. France had been bled white by her sacrifices, and our successes on the Somme and in Flanders were gained at such enormous cost that our reserves were scanty. On the other hand time was in favour of the Allies. The Central Powers were in the position of a beleaguered garrison, and the blockade was slowly starving them towards surrender. If our thin line could only hold against the desperate sortie until the Americans in their thousands came to stiffen it, we could reap the victory. These were the tremendous alternatives for which the year 1918 will be for ever memorable. Meanwhile, there were some two months in which each side could make their preparations, the one for attack and the other for defence, for whilst winter held sway campaigning on a large scale was impossible.

January 1st, 1918, saw the Battalion once more on the way to the forward area. "A," "B," and "D" Companies took over Winnepeg Camp near Ouderdom from the 2/7th Manchester Regiment, and "C" Company took over quarters in the Infantry Barracks, Ypres. Capt. F. Chesnutt-Chesney took over the position of second in command of the Battalion in place of Major R. N. Arthur, who proceeded to England to take the senior officers' course of instruction.

Major Arthur was with us when we left Colchester, and though not a Lancashire Fusilier (he was a Royal Fusilier), fell in with Lancashire ways and traditions. A "Man of the world," he contributed greatly to the amenities of the Officers Mess. Later in the year we heard that he was going strong in command of a Battalion of the London Scottish.

On January 3rd Lieut.-Col. Wike, our C.O., assumed the duties of Works Officer to the 197th Brigade, Capt. Chesnutt-Chesney assuming temporary command of the Battalion. We remained (less "C" Company) in Winnepeg Camp until January 12th. The weather was very severe; a good fall of snow, followed by a hard frost. The camp consisted of "Elephant Huts," which had been stripped of their matchboard lining by former tenants to provide fuel for the fire buckets. In the case of a hut which possessed a Canadian wood stove, the stove pipe generally leaked at every joint. It can be imagined that corrugated iron did not keep out the intense cold, and much ingenuity had to be used to supply fuel to provide some warmth in the huts. During the time in this camp officers and men were simply labourers under the C.R.E. 66th Division. We were engaged in constructing a Corps defence Line from the Potsdam Pill Boxes to Zonnebeke.

Each day every Company provided a working party of half its strength. Every alternate day, therefore, we rose from slumber at 3.30 a.m., and an hour later paraded and marched out to Brandhoek Railway Station, where we awaited the arrival of a very dilapidated train which carried us with extreme deliberation on an adventurous journey through Ypres, and finally deposited us at Gordon House Siding, a "Bomb's throw" from the ever famous Hell Fire Corner. Thence followed a good hour's march along a duck board track to the scene of our labours,

where we put in a good six hours' digging and delving amongst dirt, debris, and dead.

Reference has been made in an earlier chapter to the high state of enthusiasm created by the pursuit of "Bones and Dripping" and how Units vied with one another to secure first honours. A similar feeling was now afoot in the matter of salvage; indeed, an order was issued that every officer or man coming from the line must bring back some piece of salvage. Generals and Colonels were frequently met carrying a couple of eighteen pounder shell cases—the favourite form of salvage, as they were light, clean, and valuable. One of our Company Commanders took every opportunity, both by precept and example, of popularising this form of activity amongst all ranks of his company. So indefatigable were his efforts and so successful the results that he became known throughout the Battalion as "The Salvage King."

After we had finished our spell of digging each man collected what he could find in the way of salvage—rifles, equipment, Lewis gun trays, shell canisters, and what not, and amassed also a private collection of fuel which he hacked into reasonable dimensions. Then burdened like nothing on earth we marched down the same old duck board track to Gordon House Siding, where we dumped our salvage. Then we waited for our decrepit train, boarded it still burdened with our load of firewood, and arrived at last thoroughly worn out with fatigue amid our comrades in camp, to receive a welcome proportionate to the amount of fuel which we brought to add to the communal stock.

The following day we rested and endeavoured to restore some semblance of military order to our persons and equipment which was quickly effaced by the succeeding round of toil, and so the days went on.

Whilst in this camp the following additions to our Battalion list of honours were announced:

Capt. J. Lyell Lee, Military Cross.

C.S.M. Smith ("C" Co.), French Croix de Guerre.  
On January 12th the 66th Division relieved the 49th Division on the left sector of the Corps Front: the 197th Infantry Brigade relieved the 147th Infantry Brigade; the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers relieving the 4th Battalion West Riding Regiment in the Infantry Barracks, Ypres.

This building merits a few words of description as we found shelter within its walls on many occasions during

our stay in the Ypres sector. It was a Belgian Infantry Barracks and comprised a large open paved square, surrounded on the four sides with a range of two storied buildings. There was a corridor on both stories with an open arcade looking over the square and access to the first floor level of this corridor was obtained by means of very wide, open staircases, one on each side of the square. All rooms on both floors opened out on the corridors. The building was well cellared and the walls were of brick and extraordinarily thick; the floor and roof were of concrete.

Constant bombardment had brought about the collapse of the roof and upper story in such a way as to convert the basement of the building and parts of the ground floor into a very passable imitation of a dugout, and afforded a solid protection of rubble above and around which was proof against anything except the direct hit of a heavy shell. The R.E.'s had fitted up such rooms and cellars as were habitable with tiers of wire mesh bunks.

At the time of which we write the 66th Division had fitted up in the vicinity of the Barracks a remarkably complete laundry and bathing establishment, where baths and a change of underclothing could be obtained. This side of a soldier's life had not been so thoroughly organised in previous wars. A soldier, no less than a civilian, likes to be clean, and the efforts made by the Divisional Staff in providing such facilities were greatly appreciated.

There were many more uncomfortable places in "The Salient" than the Infantry Barracks, Ypres. We remained here for five days whilst our Brigade was in Divisional Reserve. During this period "A" and "B" Companies were employed daily on salvage work under the Divisional Salvage Officer, Capt. C. Taite. "D" Company were temporarily attached for duty to the 430th Field Company Royal Engineers, who had their H.Q. in the Barracks. "C" Company furnished additional R.E. working parties as required.

On January 17th the 197th Infantry Brigade relieved the 198th Infantry Brigade on the left sector of the Divisional front. The Battalion (less "D" Company, which remained behind with the 430th Field Company R.E.) moved forward into Hussar Camp East and relieved the 2/9th Manchester Regiment. We remained there until January 22nd as Brigade Reserve.

Lieut.-Col. Wike rejoined and took command of the Battalion, Capt. F. Chesnutt-Chesney assuming the duties of second in command. During the whole of the period that the Battalion occupied the Infantry Barracks and Hussar Camp the men were employed either in tidying up the battlefield under the Salvage Officer or in digging and hauling under the direction of the R.E.'s. The company officers, in conformity with Brigade instructions, were busy reconnoitring and making themselves acquainted with the roads and tracks leading up to the Front Line and generally improving their knowledge of the sector. This entailed close study of maps and much foot slogging through the mud, but it filled the dull days with interest and adventure.

The frosts had now gone and the whole area was now once again a morass with the shell holes full of water. Across this waste the plank roads and duck board tracks were the only avenues of progress ; the enemy knew the range of these to an inch ; shelled them in a methodical, lazy sort of way, with the result that incessant labour was required to keep them in repair.

We got to know every twist and turn of the road from Ypres to Zonnebeke and explored the many tracks which radiated towards Passchendaele on the north and over the widening triangle bounded by the Menin Road on the south. During these tours we re-visited the cutting on the Ypres-Roulers railway, and the ground round about which held for us so many splendid and sad memories. We also paid first visits to spots which bore historic names, such as the Polygon and Butte of Zonnebeke, and ground where once stood the villages of Gheluvelt and Hooge. From all this district the fury of war had passed, but it had left a wreckage, a desolation, and a foulness so complete as to make it seem impossible that life could again germinate in such an outraged soil.

On January 22nd the Battalion (less "D" Company, which remained attached to the 430th Company Royal Engineers) relieved the 2/8th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers in the left sector of the 197th Brigade front. In order to make the Battalion up to strength a composite company made up of one officer and 50 other ranks from the 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers, and two officers and 50 other ranks of the 2/8th Lancashire Fusiliers was attached. This composite company was placed under the command

of Capt. D. Gray. The conditions during this tour of duty in the line were most trying. Physical discomfort was our worst enemy and the Boche an indifferent second.

A series of isolated shell holes formed our front line. These were held by two companies. The left company front extended from the outskirts of Passchendaele village to the line of the Ypres-Roulers railway; the right company continued from the railway in the direction of Broodseinde Ridge. These front line posts were under direct observation from the Boche, and in consequence no movement was possible in the daytime if visibility were good. They were simply occupied shell holes situated on the forward crest of the high ground. On account of their position they were not so waterlogged as some, since they could be kept drained by digging channels to connect them with shell holes at a lower level and some shelter could be obtained by stretching a waterproof sheet or two across to form a roof. The Engineers had issued an enterprising brochure which showed, with the aid of diagrams, how by the insertion of a false floor of timber and riveting the sides abodes such as these could be made into veritable "homes from home." Unfortunately we had no material of any description to effect this transformation and for us they simply remained holes in the ground, in which wet and cold made conditions so trying that a tour of duty of 48 hours was as much as most constitutions could stand. One company of the Battalion from whom we took over lost 30 to 40 men from "Trench Foot" during their tour of duty in these waterlogged shell holes. We were more fortunate, our casualties over a much longer period, being only five or six.

Four things mitigated somewhat the rigours of that period. These were the rum ration; a supply of hot soup; hot tea supplied by the cooks at Battalion Headquarters and brought round in "containers"; and lastly, a Tommy's cooker—that wonderful invention which made a "Machonochie" taste delicious and made palatable even that mysterious ration.

"Of pork in tins where cabined and confined,  
It shared with beans a close imprisonment."

Company commanders visited their posts always once a night and sometimes twice. The Company Commander and his runner frequently accompanied the ration party.

which consisted of the C.S.M., two men with big containers strapped on their backs filled with hot soup; other members of the party carried water in petrol tins and rations in sandbags; and one individual carried a sack containing a supply of clean socks from the Divisional Laundry at Ypres. The omission of this last item would have caused much commotion in High Quarters where this daily supply of dry socks was held in the greatest veneration. D.H.Q. failed to realise that the socks were often handed over in a very wet condition due to the fact that the bearer, or the sack of socks, had suffered partial or total immersion in a waterlogged shell hole on the journey up.

Let us suppose the cortège started from the left company headquarters, a dugout some half mile behind the line of the Broodseinde-Passchendaele Road. Progress was slow; it took a good half hour of slipping and struggling through the mud in the darkness of the night before the Broodseinde-Passchendaele Road was reached; after that it was easier going until the ruins on the outskirts of Passchendaele village were reached. Here the corpse of a German officer marked the point at which to leave the road and strike out at right angles across a morass to the first post to be visited. Whilst rations were issued and reports received the runner was busy grovelling in the mud to find the end of a slack wire which acted as a life line. With this slipping through his hand he guided the party to the next post, and aided by the same device brought it eventually to the last post situated at the top of a deep cutting on the side of the Ypres-Roulers railway. Often enough this wire was cut through by shell fire and all had to spread out and grovel in the slush until it was found and the severed ends reconnected.

At the end of the journey the Company Commander and his runner would slip down some twenty feet of steep bank to the bottom of the cutting and squelch along knee deep in mud to report to the H.Q. of the right company. This H.Q. was situated in a former German dugout driven deep into the left bank between Decline Copse and Detect crossing. It was a most unholy spot; within a short distance on top of the opposite bank, the enemy had scored a direct hit on one of our posts and the bodies of the unfortunate occupants sprawled grotesquely down the slope.

The dugout had been a large one with two entrances, but it had been wrecked by a shell which caused the centre to fall in. Only half was habitable and to enter this half it was necessary to step over a dead German whose body was firmly embedded in the threshold. The floor was composed of duckboards embedded in thick mud amidst which lay decomposing corpses which it had been impossible to remove. On the night in mind the composite "D" Company was holding this part of the line, and Capt. D. Gray was "At home." The gloom was enlightened by a few guttering candles and we sat and drank a tot of rum, but the stench of the place and the filthy bluebottles which slowly buzzed about or crawled over walls and ceiling, were enough to damp even Gray's abounding spirits. To remain in that charnel house any length of time was somewhat of a trial to the strongest stomach, and after a short visit the guests breathed again the outer air with much relief. Critics may perhaps say that this passage, picturing some of the stark horrors of war, could well have been left out, but this record does not pretend to be a literary effort nor is it written to please the public. It would fail in its real aim if it did not give in true detail a little of the truly horrible side of war and show what officers and men of all Regiments and Battalions had to undergo. They rarely speak of their experiences—the ghastly side of the war is still more rarely touched on, with the result that the rising generation does not get a true insight into the realities of modern warfare. It is well that the general public who remained at home through youth, age, sex, or wangle should know something of the experiences which soldiers endure apart from those of actual fighting.

During this tour of duty Battalion H.Q. were located in a "pill box" on the top bank of the railway between Dash and Defy crossings. The company in support were quartered in Hill Side Farm, and the company in reserve in a cluster of pill boxes, some 500 yards further back. It was at this time that 2/Lts. J. B. McCabe and J. D. A. Bell each with an observer took up independent positions some 150 yards from the hostile posts. They remained out all day and returned at night with useful information about the enemy's system of defence and organisation.

On January 28th the 197th Infantry Brigade was

relieved by the 199th Infantry Brigade. Our Battalion was relieved by the 2/8th Manchester Regiment, and returned to the old quarters in the Infantry Barracks at Ypres as Divisional Reserve. The dominant impression we brought away with us from the line was that of dead, dead, and still more dead. Sir Philip Gibbs writes on this subject as follows :

I saw many German bodies on the fields of the Somme and on the way out from Arras and on the Vimy Ridge, but never in such groups as lay about the Pill Boxes and craters of the Salient. Everywhere they lay half buried in the turmoil of earth or stark above ground without any cover to hide them. They lay with their heads flung back into water filled craters or with their legs dangling into deep pools. They were blown into shapeless masses of raw flesh by our Artillery. Heads, legs and arms all coated in clay lay without bodies far from the spot where the men of whom they had been part had been killed.

When it is considered that our losses in the Salient were over a quarter of a million killed and the German losses quite as heavy it is no wonder that the ground was stiff with death.

Our casualties in January were : Other ranks, nine wounded. The fighting strength, including transport and details, was : 39 officers, 723 other ranks. During the month we received as reinforcements 30 other ranks.

The Division suffered a great loss in January, Major-General Sir H. A. Lawrence, who had been in command of the Division from the time it came to France, left to take up a position at General Headquarters, and in a few weeks became Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief. Previous reference has been made to the high qualities of our Divisional Commander, who still, in spite of the intervening years, clings lovingly to his old Division. His place was taken by Major-General Neill Malcolm.

From January 28th to February 3rd we enjoyed a period of rest from our labours. We had baths, changed our clothes, and cleaned equipment. Our days, however, were not entirely days of idleness, as we daily found a working party of two officers and 100 other ranks to toil under the supervision of our indefatigable friends the R.E.'s, and officers still in conformity with Brigade orders

trudged for miles until they had not only become acquainted but were even on "affectionate terms" with the salient features of the sector and the roads and approaches thereto.

At this period of the year your knowledge of the Salient deepened at every step you took.

On February 3rd the 197th Infantry Brigade relieved the 198th Infantry Brigade in the right sector, and our Battalion moved forward and relieved the 2/9th Battalion Manchester Regiment, who were in support. "D" Company still remained in Ypres with the 430th Field Company R.E., and its place was filled by one company of the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers, who were in reserve. Battalion orders, on referring to the advent of this Unit, stated that it was being attached to us for "tactical handling and work." In spite of any contrary implication in this announcement these were the normal activities of a soldier's life in the Salient, and this tour of duty was no exception to the rule, as companies of the Battalion in support were employed in carrying up the necessary material during the day time and in wiring the Front Line at night.

He would be a very glutton for work who did not regard this as full-time employment, and it is satisfactory to know that no misguided enthusiast complained that he had too much spare time or was heard to inquire what he had to do next.

On February 8th the 197th Brigade were relieved in the line by the 1st New Zealand Brigade. Our Battalion was relieved by the 1st (Wellington) Regiment, and we returned to our old quarters in the Infantry Barracks, Ypres. We left Ypres on February 10th and marched with the rest of the Brigade to the village of St. Jan ter Biezen, some three miles to the west of Poperinghe, and were located in Road Camp.

On February 13th Lieut.-Col. E. S. Hurlbatt, M.C., assumed command of the Battalion. Major Wike became second in command, Capt. F. Chesnutt-Chesney returning to command his old company. At this time the Infantry Brigades of the Division were reorganised in accordance with a scheme which affected every Infantry Brigade in the British Army.

During the early months of the war the military mathematician was a person whose opinions and deductions were received with the greatest respect.

Surrounded by a wonderful statistical array of charts and figures dealing with total populations, numbers mobilised, possible reserves, rates of wastage, and kindred information, he was able to prove that it was only a matter of months before the enemy would be unable to find sufficient men to relieve so much as his sentry posts and that then he would be driven to sue for peace on any terms he could obtain; but as the war continued through the years the stock of the mathematician slumped badly and people realised that it was unwise to dogmatise on a hypothesis. Nevertheless, wastage of man power did make itself felt and at the beginning of 1918 the War Office decided that the only way to keep up the number of Divisions then in the field was to reduce the number of Battalions in a Division. This was effected by reducing the strength of each Infantry Brigade from four Battalions to three Battalions. In each Brigade, therefore, one Battalion ceased to exist, and its personnel was available for use as reinforcements. In the 197th Brigade the 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers was the Unit disbanded.

## CHAPTER VII.

## REORGANISATION.

UNDER the orders dealing with this general reduction in strength, 1st Line Territorial Battalions which were surplus to establishment could not be disbanded. These amalgamated with their 2nd Line Units wherever they were serving. In the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division the Unit so treated in the 125th Brigade was the 1/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers. After a certain number of officers and men had been posted to other Units in the 125th Brigade the Headquarters of the Battalion, with the remainder of the officers and men, received orders to join us.

In preparation for this addition to our strength, officers and men of "D" Company were posted to the remaining companies, and for a short period the Battalion consisted of three companies only. We were not overworked during our stay in Road Camp; "Battalion reorganisation" and "Intensive training" were the official description of our activities.

It was whilst we were here that Lieut. Somerville journeyed over to the neighbouring village of Wulpen to buy a soap box. He entered a small wooden hut which seemed to be the village emporium, and in his best French asked the demoiselle behind the counter for "*Une boître pour le savon*," accompanying the request with suitable gestures. To his great surprise he was greeted with: "Soap box? Right-ho," and the article was handed to him with: "I guess that's what you want, Steve?"

Lieut. Somerville was attached from a Scottish Yeomanry Regiment. After the March Retreat we required a new Transport officer. Lieut.-Col. Porritt, D.S.O., had noticed Somerville wearing spurs, and immediately decided that an attached Yeomanry officer would make a very efficient Transport officer. Things did not go exactly right in the Transport, and one morning in a very sarcastic tone the C.O. asked Somerville if he knew anything

about horses. The reply was: "We didn't have any, we rode bicycles."

On February 16th the Battalion marched to Proven Station and entrained for Marcelcave. It was on this march that a number of us found a name which enriched, at least temporarily, the nomenclature of the district. In Belgian and French villages within the area occupied by British troops it was customary to paint in big letters the names of villages in prominent positions near the approaches and exits for general information and guidance. In this particular instance we were marching through a straggling village wondering where on earth we were when we saw painted on the side of an imposing building, "Delousing Station." At first we thought we were abreast of the Railway Station of the village of Delousing, but later realised that we were passing an old brewery devoted to the destruction of body lice.

The Battalion detrained at Guillaucourt on the morning of February 17th and marched to billets in the neighbouring village of Marcelcave. Battalion Headquarters were established in the Chateau, the grounds of which were of considerable extent and provided excellent parade grounds. The village was an important one containing a number of typical French farms with the usual commodious outbuildings. These outbuildings formed excellent company billets. After the discomforts of the Salient everything seemed delightful, and the weather, considering the time of the year, was perfect.

A few hours of Battalion or Company training in the morning, and a minimum of company routine in the afternoon, left a considerable time for unrestricted enjoyment. It was a "bon" life, and we made the most of it while it lasted.

On the evening of February 19th, eight officers and 232 other ranks of the 1/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers arrived in the village, and the following day Lieut.-Col. C. H. de St. P. Bunbury (A.P.W.O. the Yorkshire Regiment) took over the command of the amalgamated Battalions, which now officially became the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers. Capt. L. M. Robinson, M.C. (1/6th Lancashire Fusiliers) became Adjutant vice Capt. J. R. Cameron (2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers). Lieut. H. Wood (1/6th Lancashire Fusiliers) became Quartermaster vice

Lieut. C. W. James (2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers). The remaining five officers and 232 other ranks were formed into one company and became "D" Company. The Company Commanders at this time were as follows:

- "A" Company.—Capt. J. Lyell Lee, M.C.
- "B" Company.—Capt. C. H. Potter, M.C.
- "C" Company.—Capt. F. Chesnutt-Chesney.
- "D" Company.—2/Lt. C. H. Vines.

The Battalion strength was:

Total strength.—52 officers, 961 other ranks.

Fighting strength.—33 officers, 753 other ranks.

List of officers of 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers after the amalgamation of the 1st and 2nd 6th Battalions Lancashire Fusiliers:

- Lieut.-Col. C. H. de St. P. Bunbury.
- Major F. A. H. Bealey.
- Major W. Wike.
- Capt. L. M. Robinson, M.C. (Adjutant).
- 2/Lt. J. Sutherland (Assistant Adjutant)
- 2/Lt. E. Bowden (L.G. Officer).
- Lieut. E. Ormerod (Signals).
- Capt. A. M. Cowan (Transport).
- Capt. L. A. Dingley, R.A.M.C.
- Capt. and Q.M. H. Wood.
- 2/Lt. Mead (Intelligence).

**"A" Company.**

- Capt. J. L. Lee, M.C.
- Lieut. W. H. Prince.
- 2/Lt. J. D. A. Bell.
- 2/Lt. A. Inglis.
- 2/Lt. J. B. Gartside.
- 2/Lt. A. L. Clarke.
- 2/Lt. H. T. Smith.

**"B" Company.**

- Capt. C. H. Potter, M.C.
- Capt. H. C. Gill.
- Capt. D. Gray.
- 2/Lt. B. Snowdon.
- 2/Lt. J. G. Robertson.
- 2/Lt. T. Somerville.
- 2/Lt. T. P. Miller.

"C" Company.	"D" Company.
Capt. F. Chesnutt-Chesney.	Capt. J. R. Cameron.
Lieut. H. Hewitt.	Capt. J. S. Barker.
2/Lt. J. B. McCabe.	Lieut. V. N. Levi.
2/Lt. V. B. Delaney.	2/Lt. I. Skene.
2/Lt. A. F. Stoker.	2/Lt. A. Wilson.
2/Lt. C. Gray.	2/Lt. D. R. Mackay.
2/Lt. A. Dowson	2/Lt. C. H. Vines.
2/Lt. C. R. Curtis.	
2/Lt. W. A. Benson.	
2/Lt. C. W. Morrow.	

On the completion of this reorganisation Lieut.-Col. E. S. Hurlbatt, M.C., left the Battalion, Major Wike remaining second in command. The Rev. E. F. Walker, C.F., who had been with the Battalion eighteen months, returned to England.

The Battalion marched out of Marcelcave on the morning of February 28th and joined the main Amiens-St. Quentin Road at the village of Lamotte-en-Santerre.

This road ran for miles as straight as a die. It was a disheartening route as one saw mile after mile of white road still stretching ahead. On this day it looked its best, the weather was cold, but the sun shone brilliantly.

After the midday halt we began to cross the old Somme battlefield.

The villages of Foucaucourt and Estrées were in ruins, and the ground, as far as the eye could see, was scarred with lines of old trenches and pitted with shell holes half obscured with a tangle of coarse grass, amid which could be seen a jumble of rotting sandbags, rusted wire, and a litter of weapons and equipment.

In the late afternoon we arrived at a crossroads, distinguished by a notice board which bore the legend : "Here was Villers Carbonnel." Except for this board there was nothing at all to show the site of the village before which the French advance was stopped on October 17th, 1916. Near this spot we spent the night of February 17th, and were pleased to turn in and rest after a march of 17 miles.

In the morning we continued our march along the Amiens-St. Quentin Road which now dropped to the swampy valley of the Somme. After crossing the river we

continued up the rise of the opposite bank and through the ruined village of Brie, as far as Estrées en Chaussee. Here we left the main road and struck off in a north-easterly direction towards Bernes, where we spent the night in huts.

All this day we had been passing through the area of country where the enemy voluntarily retired in the Spring of 1917. In his retreat he destroyed every village and cut down every tree. In consequence the whole area was a deserted prairie whose appearance recalled Shakespeare's description.

This best garden of the world, our fertile France.  
 Whose husbandry doth lie in heaps,  
 Corrupting in its own fertility,  
 Her vine, the merry cheerer of the heart  
 Unpruned dies: her hedges even pleached,  
 Like prisoners wildly overgrown with hair,  
 Put forth disordered twigs: her fallow leas  
 The darnel, hemlock, and rank fumitory  
 Doth root upon: while that the coulter rusts  
 That should deracinate such savagery:  
 The even mead, that earst brought sweetly forth  
 The freckled cowslip, burnet, and green clover,  
 Wanting the scythe, all uncorrected rank  
 Conceives by idleness: and nothing teems  
 But hateful docks, rough thistles, kecksies, burrs.

Battalion orders did not come out until after midnight and these prescribed an early start. Company billets were scattered, with the result that some companies were late on parade, and on account of frozen pumps most of the men were unshaven. Crimes such as these could not pass unnoticed, and erring Company and Platoon Commanders were 'strafed' by the C.O. in a manner which cast a gloom over their merry spirits.

By midday we had reached our destination and "took over" from the 9th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment (73rd Brigade, 24th Division). We found ourselves in support. Battalion Headquarters with "B" and "C" Companies in occupation of the extensive quarries in front of the village of Templeux-le-Guerard, "A" Company holding three posts a few hundred yards in advance, and "D" Company some three miles back in the ruins of Roisel. We remained in these

positions until March 8th. The weather was bitterly cold with snow on the ground and everything frozen hard.

The Boche did not trouble us much, except on the 6th, when he shelled the quarries heavily with 5.9's from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Some 300 shells were sent over, which blew our cookhouses into the air, and burst in all the elegant little windows of oiled linen that gave material comfort and a look of elegance to the elephant shelters which housed Company and Battalion Headquarters. Our casualties were four men slightly wounded. There were excellent tunnels in the quarries which were responsible for our casualty list being so slight.

Lieut.-Col. Bunbury was taken ill in the quarries and sent down to hospital sick. Major T. J. Biddolph (2/8th Lancashire Fusiliers) took over temporary command of the Battalion. The Rev. I. M. Haines, C.F., joined us here.

On March 8th we relieved the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers in the front line. "A," "B," and "C" Companies holding the line with "D" Company in support.

A description of the way in which our line was held at this time, the methods relied on for its defence, and the obstacles it presented to an attack if launched with any force will be of considerable interest towards the understanding of subsequent events.

First it must be remembered that the German position opposite was one which the enemy had deliberately taken up after their voluntary retirement in 1917. It possessed great natural advantages, and had been strengthened by every means known to German military science. Our line was sketchy in comparison, and consisted of a series of advanced posts with no connecting system of trenches or continuous belts of barbed wire. It relied for defence upon strong posts distributed in depth and so situated that the intervening ground could be swept by rifle and machine gun fire. The Field Artillery were disposed in similar positions, whence they could obtain a continuous field of fire across the whole front. This constituted a formidable line of defence but it broke down in practice when the ground was covered in mist; the gun pits deluged with gas and high explosives; and the strong points carried piecemeal by the interpenetration of attacking forces.

Behind this belt of forward defences were elaborate systems of trench defences known as the "Brown" and "Green" lines. These lines were to be manned successively in case of an attack, by the troops in support and reserve.

The lines (on paper) looked most imposing, but had little value in reality as in most cases on account of the insufficiency of labour and the shortness of time since the taking over of the front from the French, they had only been traced out by the removal of sods: seldom were they of sufficient depth to give any protection, in fact, they simply "gave away" the whole system of rear defence by showing up as white lines of chalk against the light brown of the tufted grass.

It is conceivable that this part of the British Front may have been staged for the purposes of a gigantic bluff. Let it be first considered that on account of the liberation of large numbers of German divisions from the Russian front the enemy was in a position to concentrate troops in great numerical superiority against any part of the Western Front he chose to attack. Before this superiority, if resolutely applied, the Allied line must either bend or break. From Arras northward, were the line driven back, it would leave so little room to manœuvre that it might mean the loss of the Channel ports and the war. But from Arras southward to St. Quentin there was a belt of deserted country some 30 miles in depth to be traversed before the enemy came in sight of victory, or disaster faced the Allies.

So long as the line held and the Boche did not reach Amiens the loss of ground, though serious, need not be vital. Therefore, to hold the line more strongly in the north than in the south and tempt the enemy to strike towards Amiens might be sound strategy. Anyway, the fact remains that the Fifth Army held an extended front of 42 miles directly in front of Amiens with only 14 Infantry Divisions and three Cavalry Divisions, of which 11 Divisions were in line, with three Infantry and three Cavalry Divisions in reserve. The 66th Division held a very curious position in this extended front of the Fifth Army. They held the bastion of the Cologne Ridge thrown out across the Templeux Valley, which was far in advance of the general line held by the Divisions to the right and left. As will be shown later this position might

have been all right had there been a clear field of fire and a good light, but in the mist and fog the enemy was able to move almost unobserved past the Quarries until brought up by the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers in their battle positions north of the Roisel Road.

We did not, however, bother our heads much about Higher Strategy, or with doubts about the future. Our tour of duty in the line was a very pleasant one; the sun was bright, the sky blue, and, above all, the ground was clean, fresh, and healthy. "C," "B," and "A" Companies held the front line. "C" Company's Headquarters were at Benjamin Post, and "C" held the line from the Bellcourt Road northwards for some 700 yards until it was in touch with the 16th (Irish) Division. "B" Company linked up with "C" and held Rifleman, Hussar, and Valley posts, and had its Headquarters at Artaxerxes Post. "A" Company's Headquarters were at Malakoff Farm, and this company continued the line southwards for several hundred yards until it joined up with the Manchesters of the 199th Brigade. "D" Company was in Hussar Road to the north of Artaxerxes Post, whilst Battalion Headquarters was in a sunken road which ran parallel to and some half a mile in rear of Hussar Road. The Boche was very inoffensive; in fact, we hardly knew he was there except round about Malakoff Farm, where the lines were within a few yards of one another and a certain amount of bomb throwing was indulged in. As a matter of fact, our side made all the running. We had reconnoitring patrols out every night, who wandered alongside the enemy wire; and fighting patrols were ready inside our lines to sally forth and do battle if occasion demanded.

On March 8th L/Cpl. A. Jackson, M.M., 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers, attached to the 197th Brigade Light Trench Mortar Battery, was responsible for an action which proved him to be a man of remarkable courage and initiative. The guns of the Battery were in the Hargicourt valley, Jackson's gun was set to cover the crossroads which were in the German lines. At dawn, as was his custom, he went to the advanced posts to note any change or movement in the German lines, and noticed twelve German officers with maps observing our line. Immediately returning to his gun he waited until the officers approached a spot at which he had previously fired, then, single-handed he fired thirty shells, which completely

wiped out the party. Major Bealey, who was on "visiting rounds" at the time, witnessed the action. He complimented Jackson, and Captain Coombes (O.C. 197th L.T.M.B.) said that he had been recommended for the D.C.M. In the subsequent fighting Major Bealey was severely wounded and taken prisoner. Corporal Jackson was also wounded and captured, and it is quite probable the recommendation was overlooked. This case is typical of many others in showing how very difficult it was to see that every gallant action received due recognition.

Spurred on by Higher Authority we raided the advanced trenches of the enemy in the hope of obtaining prisoners for identification purposes. We were also provided by "Intelligence" (save the term) with a printed circular which was left in trenches when raided and stuck on the enemy's barbed wire and in other conspicuous places by our patrols. This priceless document was addressed in pitying terms to poor, deluded Fritz, who had come, so it alleged, flushed with an easy victory against unarmed Russians, to the Western Front, where, so the warning ran, he was opposed by resolute and well armed men (meaning us), who would stand no nonsense, and if he were so ill-advised as to attack, he was warned that he would soon be driven back to his trenches to nurse a bleeding head. We suppose that copies of this literary effusion would still be blowing about in the deserted trenches a fortnight later when we were 30 miles away fighting with our backs to Amiens.

It was at this period that 2/Lts. J. B. Gartside and I. Skene gained the M.C. for raiding enemy trenches. During this tour of duty Capt. H. C. Gill rejoined his old company, "B" Company, and Major F. A. H. Bealey returned from the Divisional Reinforcement Camp, the command of which had been given to Lieut.-Col E. S. Hurlbatt, M.C.

The night of March 14th-15th afforded considerable excitement. At 10 30 p.m. the following order was sent out from Battalion Headquarters to all companies:

"From information received prepare for attack at 1 a.m., 15th. No movement to take place until further orders. Patrols to be more vigilant than ever. Acknowledge." The message was trite enough to create a real flutter. This was followed at 11 45 p.m. by the further order: "Man battle stations. Acknowledge when in position."





This suggested that the great attack was really going to start, and, incidentally, that we were "for it."

Since our orders in such a contingency were to fight to the last where we stood in order to give time for troops in rear to take up their positions, we had all the thrills of expectation desired. However, it was a false alarm, and dawn found us peaceful, but chilly.

On March 15th the Battalion was relieved by the 2/8th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and we marched back to Divisional Reserve in Roisel, where we found excellent accommodation in elephant shelters erected amidst the ruins of the village. Here we trained and supplied working parties, and as a relaxation obtained a pass to go by train to revel in the shacks and ruins of proud Peronne.

During the week Capt. J. L. Lee, M.C., reported back from a course of instruction at the 2nd Army School at Wisques, and Capt. J. S. Barker returned to the Battalion from the 1st Army School, Lieut. V. L. Levi from the XI. Corps School, Lieut. E. Ormerod returned to duty from hospital, and Capt. C. H. Potter, M.C., was sent down sick to Field Ambulance.

Major F. A. H. Bealey was appointed to the command of Brigade working parties in the forward areas and took up his Headquarters in Templeux quarries.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE RETREAT OF THE 5th ARMY.

"If this blinking war does not end very soon,  
There'll be nobody left in the ruddy platoon."

IN spite of the great efforts which have been made to dispel the fog of war which hung over the Battalion during the ever eventful days of March, 1918, it still persists over certain periods and parts of the story; nevertheless, an attempt has been made to show in detail the part played by the Unit in the great German attack, and the following account is the composite story of officers and men of the Battalion.

As mentioned in the previous chapter the attack was expected but the exact date was not known.

On the night of the 20th-21st the men slept in battle order. About 4 a.m., March 21st, sleeping men were awakened by the noise of an intense bombardment. Capt. L. M. Robinson, M.C., the Adjutant (now—1927 commanding the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers), was sharing a hut with Capt. Dingley, R.A.M.C., the Medical Officer. Lieut-Col. Robinson's account of the fighting is given below :

"I woke Dingley, who slept soundly. His opinion was that it was the usual morning 'hate.' It appeared to be rather out of the run of usual morning hates, so I got up and had a look out. The morning was rather misty, but the whole eastern horizon from north to south was lit with a continuous line of flashes reaching sometimes high into the sky.

"By this time R.S.M. Watkins had also arisen and summoned orderly sergeants. The detail had been prepared for some time, and in about half an hour the whole Battalion was ready to move. The Headquarters details, and officers' servants had already been told what

to do, and by the time orders came from Brigade Headquarters the Battalion had fallen in and the transport was all loaded up. The order from Brigade was, of course, to occupy our Battle position. This was a line of trenches to the north of the Roisel-Templeux Road about 2,000 yards from Roisel. The trenches were on a gradual forward slope with a beautiful field of fire, but very conspicuous, as they had been dug in the chalk and were of little value as shelter owing to insufficient depth.

"The Battalion was sent off by platoons with 100 yards distance between each. Lieut.-Col. Biddulph and I went off on foot in rear of the second company. This would be about 5 a.m. When we were about half-way to the Battle position an orderly came down from the front yelling for the Adjutant. He informed me that the Boche were shelling the trenches in the Battle position and we were to take up a line about 50 yards in rear. I reckoned that the front platoon would be almost in position at the time I received the message, and being on foot started to sprint up to the front of the Battalion. An anti-aircraft lorry came past at this moment, so I jumped on."

(Another officer states: "On the way up, moving very slowly through the thick fog we expressed our views in no measured terms on the uselessness of anti-aircraft motor lorries and motor machine guns, which seemed to spend their time moving up and down and pushing us into the side of the road or completely off it.")

Lieut.-Col. Robinson continues: "The fog began to thicken and get worse as we neared the ridge. We had passed about six platoons when a shell burst quite near. Some one shouted 'Gas,' and the lorry took a header into the ditch. I fell off, of course, and leaving the ditched lorry started up the road again. Eventually I found the O.C. Company with his leading platoon. They were in a sunken part of the road just behind the crest. There was not much shelling on or about the road, although the bombardment was going strong in front. We halted the front platoon and went to look at the Battle position. The fog was now very thick (From Private Harrop's account: 'So dense was the fog that the men groped their way to the line maintaining touch with

one another by each man holding on to the bayonet scabbard of the man in front.') cut from what we could see the Boche had overestimated the range and his shells were falling about 200 yards in the rear of our line. We therefore decided that the best thing to do was to get the Battalion into its proper Battle position (this was very easy to find even in the fog) and move forward if the Boche reduced his range.

"The Battalion was in position by 6 a.m. The bombardment continued. About 8 a.m. we had leisure to get what we could in the way of breakfast and consider the plight of the poor fellows in the front line.

"Battalion Headquarters was established in a quarry rather to the left of our line. The position had been chosen because it was possible to see the whole front from the top of it. It was an unfortunate place, however, because it was far away from the road and difficult for messages. The Boche had evidently got instructions to shell it, and he carried out his instructions very thoroughly, killing several of the Headquarters signallers and blowing the Signalling Officer—Ormerod—and myself (who were in a Nissen hut) a considerable distance—all with one direct hit.

"Capt. Dingley, R.A.M.C., established his aid-post in this quarry in a small hut. The hut was demolished by the shelling. The stretcher-bearers, Corporal Collins and Medical Orderly Private Basset, did some very good work here. The M.O. sent them out of the quarry until a case was dressed, and then at a signal they doubled in and took the case away.

"After this we moved Battalion H.Q. to the road on the extreme right of the Battalion front. From 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. we were getting shelled rather badly, the main enemy barrage, which had lifted from the front line, was now falling on our position, and by 10 a.m. we had quite a lot of casualties.

"The fog now began to lift. All this time a steady stream of casualties had been coming down the road from the direction of Templeux. The bombardment appeared to have demolished the front line, and had the line been thickly held the casualties would have been much heavier. From the fact that the barrage had lifted on to ourselves we surmised that the Boche advance had commenced.

"By 10 30 a.m. or so the country was quite clear—a beautiful sunny day—and as the ridge beyond Templeux quarries became visible we were able to see the Boche advance guard on the crest of the hill and a German battery coming into action. The front line had been pierced. On our left we could see the enemy advancing in quite large numbers, almost between ourselves and Epéhy: the Division on our left had gone too.

"We managed to get a battery of 18 pounders on to the gents on the top of Templeux quarry ridge, and the gunners did great execution, as also did a 4.5 Howitzer Battery. This battery was at work *in front* of our line in full view of the enemy, who continued to come up over the ridge and work away to our left all the morning. Our machine guns had some very good shooting on the left flank and caused the enemy there to sheer off."

(The 18 pounder battery mentioned above was "B" Battery, 330th Brigade R.F.A., commanded by Major W. R. Cunliffe. It fought throughout with the greatest skill and determination. Major Wike testifies that he saw a complete German Battalion annihilated by its fire, and the fact has been verified that it was the last battery in action on our front. It fought to the last, keeping the enemy at bay with Lewis guns. Its gun pits were finally rushed by the Prussian Guards who had been especially brought up for that purpose. Major Cunliffe was taken prisoner, and later received the M.C. for his services, but the fight that he put up was worthy of a greater honour.)

"The Boche did not advance beyond Templeux village for some time, and from our position we could see very well that he was establishing himself there and in the quarries. From 10 a.m. the enemy artillery slackened off considerably; we rightly guessed that it was moving to take up new positions.

"No more movement took place till about 12 noon, when it seemed that the time for a counter-attack had arrived. This was also urged by the O.C. 4.5 Howitzer Battery, who wanted to get his guns away. Accordingly we set off to attack the Boche at about 12 30 to 1 p.m. Two Companies, 'B' and 'D,' were in the front line, and 'C' Company in support. 'A' Company, during this day's fighting, was on detached duty under the orders of Lieut.-Col G. P. Norton, D.S.O. (O.C. Templeux Defences). We got quite a heavy barrage from our

faithful 18 pounder battery and the 4.5 Howitzer Battery in front, and somewhat to my surprise the attack was quite successful, although we had a number of casualties.

"The attack was across a perfectly open plain, and had the enemy machine guns been properly sited we should have suffered very heavily. By 2 p.m. we were established in the village of Templeux, but in a very bad position, as our communications from the front line were overlooked by the enemy on the high ground beyond the village, and both our flanks were in the air.

"On visiting 'D' Company in the line that afternoon I heard to my great regret that Capt. Cameron had been killed. He had done exceedingly well in the counter-attack and was a very gallant fellow.

"We tried to get in touch with our flanks, but all efforts failed: there was no one on our flanks to get in touch with. It became very obvious that in the event of any further advance on the part of the Boche our position, or that of our forward companies, would be untenable.

"Whilst walking down to Battalion H.Q., which was established south of the road a little in advance of our original Battle position, a squadron of Boche aeroplanes came straight down the road blazing away with machine guns. About 30 feet up, and painted bright red, they were, I believe, the famous 'Richtoven Circus,' commanded by the Baron of that name. At any rate, they caused our little party to take cover beneath a derelict motor lorry from beneath which we sought to bring them down with revolvers, needless to say, without effect.

"Just before dusk we established touch with Brigade H.Q. by telephone—for the first time since early morning—and were able to explain the precarious position of our two forward Companies. We suggested they were withdrawn to our original Battle position where they would have at least a decent field of fire and some chance of holding on. About midnight a message came through—from G.H.Q., I believe—to the effect that we were not to withdraw one inch but do the best we could where we were. Our Support Company was accordingly established in the old Battle position, and the other companies did what they could do to fortify the western outskirts of Templeux village against all comers.

"This was the position at 4 a.m. on March 22nd—we had held our Battle position and made a successful counter-attack. If there were any Divisional Reserves they failed to put in an appearance, except a few cyclists, cavalry, and other stout fellows.

"The night March 21st-22nd was quiet, but about 4 a.m. the bombardment started again. We were, of course, nearer to it this time and it appeared to be very heavy. The dawn broke exactly as on the previous day—first a mist, and then a thick fog. We had to abandon our Battle position trenches owing to very heavy shelling—mostly gas—and take up a position about 200 yards forward. The casualties in the support and reserve companies had been very heavy.

"About 6 a.m. the Boche barrage—which had been astonishingly accurate—lifted, and knowing that this meant the recommencement of the enemy attack, we did our best to get artillery support. We had already arranged with the gunners that they were to open fire covering our front as soon as the barrage lifted as we felt sure that all communications would go. Our faithful 18 pounder battery did all they could, and although firing entirely by map, caused considerable execution. Soon after 6 a.m. the enemy blundered into us; several small parties at once. They were immediately shot down without difficulty. From this time till 10 a.m. or so we were continually firing at small parties of Boche advancing, but it soon became obvious that they were giving points of resistance like ours a wide berth, and taking advantage of their great superiority in numbers were simply advancing through the gaps in the broken line, aided very considerably by the low visibility due to the mist and fog.

"We were now completely surrounded, in fact, once when the fog lifted for a minute, we were able to see the enemy directly in our rear. Our position was fairly good so long as our ammunition lasted and provided the fog did not lift. Unfortunately the ammunition ran out. We could do no good by remaining where we were, and the men were divided into small parties and instructed to scatter and concentrate if possible in front of Roisel. There seemed to be a fair chance that some of them would get through the Boche in the fog, which they actually did."

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The isolated fighting and the unprecedented casualties have made it almost impossible to give a connected story from March 21st to March 30th, and a certain amount of overlapping has been unavoidable. Any points of difference in the collected accounts have been submitted to as many of the officers now alive as were likely to furnish definite information.

From the details now given and those which will be available when other Units of the Division write their history, future students of the Retreat of the 5th Army will be able to draw their own conclusions as to the part played by the Division in this memorable struggle.

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"A" Company of the Battalion (Capt. J. Lyell Lee, M.C.) were on detached duty, as previously mentioned. On receipt of the order "Man Battle Stations" the Company proceeded to take up its prearranged position. Lieut. W. H. Prince, accompanied by two "runners," was sent forward to report to the O.C. Templeux Defences (Lieut-Col. G. P. Norton, D.S.O.) and bring back instructions regarding the position to be occupied. In the meantime the Company halted on the road about 200 yards S.W. of Templeux sheltered from the shells, which were beginning to fall thick and fast, by a high bank. The position chosen was an excellent one, and the Company suffered no casualties. Wounded and stragglers came struggling down the road from Templeux, and a Padre, whose name has been unobtainable, did splendid work amongst the wounded.

Lieut. Prince found great difficulty in finding his way in the dense fog, and being greatly handicapped by his gas mask, removed it at frequent intervals in order to find his position and carry out his instructions. He returned suffering badly from the effect of the gas and reported that he had been unable to reach O.C. Templeux Defences. He was sent down to Field Ambulance, and Lieut. J. B. Gartside, M.C., was sent off on the same difficult errand.

Gartside did his work splendidly—as his Company Commander said: "Like the brave little fellow he always was."

To the waiting Company the minutes passed like hours. In the meantime grim figures kept on looming up out of the fog, which appeared to be denser than ever.

Motor dispatch riders groped along pushing their machines. Ambulances crawled at a slow walking pace, sometimes with a man in front as a guide; limbers with the drivers leading their horses; wounded to whom the fog added pain; passed the halted Company. One ambulance drove down the slight incline on the opposite side of the road to the sheltering Company, only to turn over and have its canvas covering riddled in a few minutes from the flying shrapnel.

Eventually Gartside returned with one arm hanging limp from his shoulder. He was anxious for help to be sent at once to his runners who had been badly hit as the party were at the Templeux crossroads. The Company Commander rightly decided that he could not turn his fighting men into stretcher bearers or he would soon have no Company left. Gartside's wound was roughly bound up and he returned to the Templeux Dressing Station to get help from there for his men. The orders brought by this gallant officer were to "Remain and await instructions." By this time the fog was lifting. The Company scouts reported some trenches close to the road in L.2.c., which ran from Templeux past the crucifix, and the Company moved forward and occupied them.

The sun now began to gain the mastery over the fog, and as the visibility improved the shelling slackened until it almost ceased. The Boche gunners were undoubtedly making the most of the changing conditions and moving forward into fresh positions. A battery of Royal Field Artillery were hard at work in front of the Company position, roughly at L.2.c.9.2.

It was still impossible to find out what had really happened or what was likely to happen. The first definite news was obtained from a dispatch rider who had ridden through a party of Germans *marching* along the road. He reported that the enemy was streaming across the country in large numbers. This information was passed on to the gunners, and the guns were dragged from their pits into the open ready to "limber up and away" when absolutely necessary, but meanwhile they continued to blaze away.

Parties of the enemy now began to appear over the sky line in the vicinity of the quarries, and the battery did some excellent shooting.

Lieut. Bell was sent to the O.C. Templeux Defences for orders, and returned with instructions that "A" Company, 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, were to occupy the trench line in front of Templeux village. This line ran from the crossroads at L.2.d.4.o. in a shallow curve following roughly the line of the 90 contour on the sketch map of the fighting. The new line was occupied with little loss, and Lieut. Curtis, who was acting Adjutant to O.C. Templeux, gave Capt. Lee the first connected and coherent account of the events of the day.

Patrols were dispatched to the flanks, and contact made on the right, but the left seemed to be "in the air." Lieut. Bell was sent out later with a small patrol to get in touch with some R.E.'s and Borderers, who were also supposed to be part of the village defence force.

The shelling had died away, and though heavy M.G. fire was going on, everything seemed peaceful after the events of the morning. The enemy was in occupation of Templeux quarries directly across the valley, and the attack was expected from there. Remnants of the scattered and broken Battalions of the Division who had felt the full shock of the German onslaught joined up with "A" Company in the trench. Colonels and privates, men of all the Units of the Division, lined up to help against the expected attack. This did not mature, and all these willing helpers were passed on to the rear for reorganisation. Lieut Bell did not return, and there is little doubt that he was killed soon after leaving the Company.

It was about this time that the remaining companies of the 6th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers commenced their counter-attack from the Brown Line or Battle position. "B" Company (Capt. H. C. Gill), "C" Company (Capt. Barker), "D" Company (Capt. Cameron) moved forward in open order as if on parade, keeping a good line under heavy artillery fire. The Companies advanced as far as the west side of Templeux, where the whole advance was held up temporarily by heavy machine gun fire. This advance took place in full view of "A" Company, who did not know at the time, and perhaps will not know until they read this account, that they were watching their own comrades in battle.

Parties of the enemy in small isolated groups dribbled over the crest of the ridge behind the quarries and worked

their way down from the high ground along the roads in F.26.c. and F.27.c., and all three Companies did considerable execution on these approaching groups with Lewis gun and rifle fire. As far as conditions allowed Companies were reorganised and the Battalion was reinforced by a number of men from the East Lancashire Regiment. Parties were pushed through the village and round the left flank where better fields of fire could be obtained. Capt. H. C. Gill was wounded when trying to get parties of "B" Company through the outskirts of the village.

The enemy must have made good use of the high ground on our left as parties were reported passing through Georges Copse L.I.C., and making their way west along the valley which they commenced to enter from various parts of the spur running from Bouleaux woods to Roisel.

Gradually the village was cleared and a line was established from the cemetery in F.26.d. to about L.2.b.g.1.

The counter-attack was led by Major Wike, who established his Headquarters at L.8.a.9.7. Capt. F. A. H. Bealey was severely wounded and taken prisoner about this time. Continued enemy pressure drove in the centre of the line and confused fighting took place in the village, parts of which changed hands on several occasions. This enemy wedge made it impossible for "A" Company to get into touch with the rest of the Battalion in and about Templeux. The Company therefore, after reorganisation and the departure of the remnants of our front line, concentrated its attention on the groups of Boche which could be seen in the neighbourhood of the quarries.

Suddenly fire was opened on this Company from the left rear, and the enemy entered the trench at its extreme left very near to the H.Q. Templeux Defences. No warning had been received from this H.Q. that they were going to evacuate their position, and it is probable that the advent of the enemy in the rear was as big a surprise to them as to "A" Company.

Captain Lee reversed his front and his men opened rapid fire on the approaching enemy. The Company was in great danger and nearly surrounded. The men on the extreme left had been killed or captured.

Under these circumstances the Company gradually

moved to the right and took up a position on high ground above the village about L.2.d.6.2. facing N.N.E.

It was intended to make a stand here, but the position was too exposed, and the Company came under heavy fire from field guns at close quarters. The position was held for about twenty minutes and the enemy prevented from leaving the village. Other enemy groups turned their attention on to the unfortunate Company and two Lewis gun teams were completely knocked out.

A further retirement was considered necessary, and the Company fell back on to "D" Company (Capt. Cameron), who were holding a position near the Crucifix. A portion of the Company was caught by M.G. fire when on the road and about twenty men were hit in about as many seconds. "A" and "D" Companies were now joined. Cameron had just arranged with his officers a scheme for getting in touch with "B" and "C" Companies, who were on the other side of the Roisel-Templeux Road L.2.c.0.9. to L.2.c. central; he got out of the trench to make his final arrangements, and was immediately killed. Lieut. Levi got out of the trench to get Cameron in and was instantly wounded. Another officer followed, and he fell, shot in the legs.

The force in the trenches near the Crucifix now consisted of a depleted "A" Company under Capt. Lee, and three platoons of "D" Company under Lieut. Smith. Major Wike was reported to be in some buildings about L.8.a.9.7. Leaving Lieut. Smith in charge of the two Companies, Captain Lee crawled out of the trench and made his way, snake fashion, through the grass to report to Major Wike. Lee, with his 6ft. 2½in. would make a bulky snake, but he made the journey safely and found advanced Battalion H.Q.

Major Wike informed Lee that his right rear was covered by the 4th Platoon of "D" Company under Lieut. Skene about L.8.c.1.7.

Night fell and rations came up. The first line transport did sterling work. The Adjutant, Capt. Robinson, had made superhuman efforts to supply the Companies with ammunition, but his supplies were limited, and the dislocation in rear, with the crowded state of Roisel, made it impossible to get the amount really required. Ammuni-

tion was collected from wounded and dead to make up the deficiency as far as possible.

Listening posts were posted in the Crucifix enclosure and in front of the various companies.

Just before dusk a British aeroplane came over our posts flying low and calling with his Klaxon horn. There were no flares to light, so maps were waved to show our position, but it is very doubtful whether these signals were observed.

Skene's platoon was attacked during the night by an enemy patrol, which was driven off.

About 2 a.m. on March 22nd Major Wike received an order to return to Headquarters.

Another enemy patrol tried to get past Crucifix corner, but was driven off by "A" Company, leaving one officer and two other ranks dead.

The night passed very quietly. Reports were sent to Battalion H.Q. and all wounded were cleared.

The morning of the 22nd opened exactly as the previous one. A thick blanket of fog enshrouded everything, and about 4 a.m. the guns opened again. After a heavy bombardment lasting till about 5 a.m. the enemy attacked again. The attack seemed to be on Skene's position and was pushed on with great determination. Skene's platoon was soon surrounded and overwhelmed. A runner got through and reported the position, and "A" and "D" composite company managed to find a gap in the Boche envelopment. The company retired down the hillside under M.G. fire from all sides to Brigade Headquarters and found it deserted. They continued through a thicket and crossed the road to a bank on the other side. Here they found trenches manned by a mixed lot from all Battalions.

A Major (name unknown) took charge of the whole line and reorganised. It was found that very little ammunition was left and there were no bombs. Clips of cartridges had to be collected from the men to find enough ammunition to fill the Lewis gun drums, and these had to be filled by the fingers, no filling handles being available, and this was a slow and laborious process.

The trench was so deep that it was impossible to fire out of it until fire steps had been cut. Whilst this work was in progress the M.G. section with the party was placed

on the parapet, but was knocked out after searching the thicket in front.

The frontal attack was stopped, but enemy bombers got into the trench from the left.

Orders were given for each officer to take charge of men from his own Battalion and work back towards Roisel in artillery formation.

The fog had now cleared and to add to the discomfiture of the battered remnants of "A" and "D" Companies they were heavily machine gunned by four low flying enemy aeroplanes—painted red—which appear to have belonged to the same squadron previously mentioned.

The retirement continued with little halts to drive off any Boche who were too venturesome. Eventually "A" Company came across some dismounted cavalry lying out in open order and lined up with them.

This position appears to have been about the road triangle in L.7.b. opposite Georges Copse. The enemy suddenly issued in large numbers from the copse and attacked the new position. They formed a splendid target and the shooting was good. A second wave issued from the copse and the survivors of the first wave got into dead ground.

At this point the cavalry began to leave the position, and as practically all officers and N.C.O.'s had been knocked out, Capt. Lee was unable to keep his own men from following the cavalry. In any case the whole would have been overwhelmed in the next few minutes. It had been reported that there were some trenches a few hundred yards in rear, and orders were given for the remaining men to double back to them. This they did under a hail of bullets. Capt. Lee was shot in the leg and taken prisoner, along with a number of his men, wounded in the same dash.

As will have been seen by the narrative, the attempt to join up with "C" and "B" Companies on the west of the Roisel-Templeux Road had been frustrated by the death of Capt. Cameron and the other officers.

Towards the evening of the 21st those two Companies were forced from Templeux village itself into the sunken road position already mentioned and were in line with "A" and "D" Companies, who were holding the position by the Crucifix.

Divisional machine guns placed somewhere about L.8.a.7.2. played a great part in the late afternoon of the 21st. They were firing across to the south of Templeux and undoubtedly saved the right flank from attack that day.

The attack on the 22nd commenced from the position dominated by these guns, and it was only due to the fog blinding the guns that they were unable to render much assistance to the harassed "A" and "D" Companies.

During the night of the 21st-22nd March one of the two companies ("C" Company) holding the sunken road position was brought back by the C.O. and placed in the former battle position. This gave a little more depth to the Battalion.

Battalion Headquarters made their final stand somewhere in the neighbourhood of L.7.b.9.9. They put up quite a good fight while the S.A.A. lasted.

The enemy had overwhelmed the sunken road position and survivors state that battery after battery of enemy artillery trotted calmly over the sky line, leisurely unlimbered and opened fire.

Later in the morning the Brown Line was penetrated and Battalion Headquarters surrounded and captured.

Two officers alone escaped the deluge: Capt. Dingley, R.A.M.C., and 2/Lt. Sutherland, the assistant Adjutant.

The C.O. (Lieut.-Col. Biddolph), Adjutant (Capt. Robinson), Lieut. Ormerod (Signalling officer), with others of the Headquarters Staff, moved from B.H.Q. to their respective battle positions. Capt. Dingley, R.A.M.C., with his orderly, Pte. Bassett, were making final preparations to deal with the casualties expected when some one outside called out that the enemy was just near the dugout entrance, and so the M.O. and his orderly departed by the other one with what dressings they could snatch up.

Capt. Dingley writes: "We had been reading some news bulletins of Anzacs who investigated dugouts by throwing bombs down, and we had visions of ourselves being investigated by the same satisfactory methods."

On arriving outside figures could be made out round the other entrance, and several shots fired after the rapidly vanishing pair. Luckily for the Battalion and the Brigade the Boche musketry was inaccurate, and Capt. Dingley got away.

Capt. Potter's account of the later phases of the fight makes reference to the gallant, self-sacrificing conduct of this officer throughout the whole of the eventful ten days.

It is the writer's privilege to have been in touch with all ranks of the Battalion who survived—many owing their life to the professional skill of this officer—and hearing the united praise of these men for the untiring efforts of "Doc." Dingley and his small but gallant personnel of stretcher bearers it is only just that the survivors of the Battalion should, through the reference in this book, tender him and his men their grateful thanks.

After the capture of Battalion H.Q., Lieut. Sunderland collected stragglers and formed a defensive post about seventy yards behind the Brown Line, where he was killed shortly afterwards.

Groups of determined men made their way back through the parties of Boche who appeared from K.6.c. and K.11.b., and joined up in a defensive line with a dismounted cavalry regiment east of Roisel, but the weight of the enemy attack brushed aside all opposition as they were able to turn a position almost as soon as it was taken up.

No troops were seen behind except a six inch howitzer battery with gunners working like mad to get their guns away covered by a small party of dismounted Hussars.

Private Harrop writes : "The remnants of the Battalion were taken still further back and a roll call was taken. The Brigadier was present and looked very upset. We marched through Roisel and satisfied our hunger and thirst at the B.E.F. canteen which had been abandoned."

The line of retreat lay through Roisel and by Nobis-court Farm. Here tanks were seen manoeuvring to get into position to strengthen the line of the 50th Division. By this time the scattered parties had begun to join up, and the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, under Capt. Barker, a little over a company strong, withdrew through the 50th Division and were served with some very welcome rations and tea.

Orders were received at 8 p.m. to march via Doingt and Peronne. The Somme was crossed late at night at the latter place. The weary men had little chance of rest as they were posted along the river bank and on the railway bridge. This entailed great hardship on the

already exhausted troops, who, however, failed to realise that they would be hard at it again in the morning.

On Saturday, the 23rd, things were more normal : the Battalion transport had come up with water, stores, and S.A.A. It was another foggy morning, and very soon after daylight, stray bullets began to come across the river.

At 10 a.m. information was received that the enemy were advancing on Peronne and that the bridges over the river would be blown up by noon.

The C.O. of Casualty Clearing Station showed extreme surprise when asked for a convenient Nissen Hut to be used as a Regimental Aid Post and decided to evacuate his casualties immediately. The ambulances had to travel along the Peronne-Barleux Road which ran parallel to the river for a short distance, and the last load or two of casualties were sniped at by the enemy who were now appearing in greater numbers on the opposite bank of the river.

Extract from a private's story : "Near by was a Casualty Clearing Station that had been abandoned. They had left behind plenty of bacon and sugar, so we had a good breakfast."

During the morning the remains of the 16th Division passed across the bridge, after which the bridge was blown up. Attempts were made to blow up the railway bridge, but did not meet with the same success.

Capt. Barker and Lieuts. Bowden and Mead made further attempts on the railway bridge in the afternoon.

The 16th Division had to retire up the road over the hill. It was beautifully fine now and they were in full view of the enemy. They were exposed to considerable artillery and M.G. fire, which caused many casualties. These were cleared by Capt. Dingley and his stretcher bearers, and the ground was searched again after the shelling had ceased.

About 4 p.m. in the afternoon orders were received from the O.C. Brigade to send the Battalion Reserve, "C" Company, to reinforce the 2/5th Battalion Manchester Regiment on our left flank.

Sunday, the 24th, saw the inevitable foggy morning, which, in spite of what Lundendorff says, helped the advancing enemy with his closely following organised

reserves just as much as it set at nought all previously prepared defence schemes depending for their success on normal visibility.

Capt. Barker and Lieut. Bowden had done all that was possible with the men available, and Capt. Dingley, who had now taken over the duties of Brigade Medical Officer, found them "very merry and bright in spite of the last few days' hard and continual fighting."

The position occupied by the Battalion was held through the night of the 23rd. On the 24th it was under heavy shell and M.G. fire, during which the enemy made repeated efforts to cross the river, which did not succeed.

A wooden bridge over the duct which had been partially destroyed by the R.E.'s was soaked in petrol and burnt by men from the Battalion.

Between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. the Battalion on the immediate left was obliged to give ground, enabling the enemy to turn our position which we had held for twenty-four hours.

The Battalion under heavy artillery and M.G. fire fought its way back for a distance of about a mile, and reached a position held by troops of the 50th Division about dusk.

At this time all the officers of the Battalion were casualties except Captain Barker and Lieuts. Bowden and Mead. Later in the evening a welcome addition to the strength arrived, Capt. D. Gray, 2/Lt. A. Dowson, 2/Lt. J. H. Robinson, and 2/Lt. O. R. McKay rejoining the Unit from courses of instruction.

The following extract from Private Harrop's account is given to verify the burning of the bridge: "From 12 noon on the Saturday the men were lined out in a railway cutting watching for enemy movements. When darkness came on, I, along with five others were taken by an officer (I could not recognise him in the dark) to a forage dump; three of us carried a bale of straw each, the others brought tins of petrol. We took these to a wooden bridge over the river, and after scattering the straw and petrol about we set fire to the bridge. Bags of sugar were set on fire to prevent them falling into enemy hands."

A company of Durham Light Infantry now appeared in one part of the line, and the day was full of rumours that the long expected reinforcements were about to arrive.





On Monday, the 25th, messages were received that the enemy were moving round the left flank. The whole of the defending party were receiving considerable attention from the Boche gunners, and to add to their embarrassment they were shelled by a battery of our own guns, which evidently mistook them for the enemy.

The 197th Brigade—now less than the strength of a battalion—were forced to commence their retirement again and fell back fighting a rearguard action via Assevillers through Dompierre. The move continued the following day, the 26th, via Chuignes in the direction of Foucaucourt, hampered a little by a low flying Boche 'plane which persistently fired its machine gun.

The Brigade were placed in position and took up a line, Proyart-Framerville, falling back later on Harbonnières.

The enemy still continued his pressure on the left flank, and there were heavy casualties, including Capt. Barker and Lieut. Bowden. Capt. Barker, who was wounded and taken prisoner, was a great loss, as he had commanded the remnant of the Battalion since the 22nd through some of the heaviest fighting, and he and Lieut. Bowden were in no small degree responsible for the creditable way the Battalion acquitted itself. Lieut. Parsons was badly hit in the shoulder, eventually losing his arm.

The following extract from Major Dingley's account is given in his own words. He writes of March 27th :

We were again troubled by the enemy getting round our left flank. Rations came up via Lamotte, and we heard that the transport were captured as they entered Lamotte on their return journey. It was rather disquieting to know that the enemy were both there and in Bayonvillers, especially as I had a number of seriously wounded in a house and ambulances could not get up to me.

Earlier in the day casualties had streamed down the road after a hastily applied dressing or temporary splint. Men helping others—in several cases fractures being pushed down in wheelbarrows—one officer with a head wound, exposing his brain, walking down. We were helpless and only able to do hurried dressings and to put the more serious cases in charge of their less injured comrades.

The German occupation of the Lamotte area prevented that line of retreat, and I was very thankful that at the last moment in the C.C.S. I had taken a couple of bottles of morphia and some dressings, etc., to replace my depleted stock. As night came on I went over to Brigade to try and get some ambulances through via Caix. I was in a quandary, for it was only a matter of time before Harbonnières fell, and I had about twenty very serious cases—femurs, chests, etc., who were covering the floor of a house and sleeping heavily under morphia. I could not make up my mind whether it was my job to stay with them or to leave them, having put up a notice to attract the enemy's attention, and I did not like to leave one of my men behind and go myself. It would have been difficult to select the man to leave as my orderly and every one of my bearers were out to do everything that was possible, and they all would have volunteered to stay immediately it was suggested. I was fortunately relieved of my difficulty by the arrival of several ambulances which were able to take practically all the cases. However, more casualties arrived and we collected half a dozen very serious cases in addition to walking wounded.

Early on the 28th the Brigade H.Q. moved off towards Caix and we went round hunting for vehicles. We fortunately found a staff car looking for some one. The driver was persuaded to load up, and we got the last six comatose people stowed in the car and sent off. Our move towards Caix then commenced in a south-westerly direction as the enemy were in our immediate rear and all round our left flank.

On Friday, the 29th, the Aid Post was at Demuin at the bottom of the hill. We had moved there during the night, only to be shelled out, so we established it on the main road one hundred yards west of the crossroads. We were kept very busy here, and withdrew into Hangard in order to have better accommodation and to be able to obtain hot water for the casualties.

30th, Saturday. We had heard the night before that the enemy were to attack at 6 a.m. We were kept busily occupied in the early night, but work became quiet in the early morning, and we dropped

off to sleep to waken just before six. We hastily prepared for eventualities, and at 6 a.m. shells dropped right into the room where we had been working and sleeping, wounding one of the Medical Officers. An Aid Post was established further along the road clear of their barrage line. For the remainder of the battle two ambulances were attached to the Aid Post, and as the retreat was along a road with a good surface this greatly facilitated the evacuation of the casualties. It was on this road that our long hoped for reserves were found when we retired through a French Division.

The following account which deals with the last five days of the fighting has been compiled from particulars supplied by Capt. C. H. Potter.

At 3 a.m. on the morning of March 26th a composite Battalion formed of all the available men in the Divisional Reinforcement Camp marched out of Corbie. The Battalion, some 600 strong, and composed of four companies, was under the command of Lieut.-Col. W. B. Little, D.S.O. (5th Border Regiment). He had just arrived home on leave when the German attack was launched, and as soon as he heard of it he hurried back to France as quickly as possible, eventually arriving at Corbie at 7 p.m. March 25th.

These remarks are a fitting introduction to an officer who was an inspiration to those whom he commanded and under whom it was both an honour and a pleasure to serve.

Another officer who had shown an equal devotion to duty was Capt. E. L. Higgins, M.C. (2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers), who abandoned his leave in England and arrived back in Corbie about the same time as Colonel Little. Higgins was given a company in the scratch Battalion. He received a bunch of machine gun bullets in his arm and the D.S.O. for his part in the subsequent proceedings.

Another company was given to Capt. Potter, who had reported back from hospital at Corbie in company with Capt. G. Fox (2/6th Manchesters). Fox was appointed Adjutant and won the M.C. for his services.

Captain Potter's company was largely made up of a draft to the Fusilier Brigade just arrived from England

under the command of Lieut. F. Heydon (6th Lancashire Fusiliers), and contained a good number of 6th Lancashire Fusiliers men. Lieut. C. H. Vines (6th Lancashire Fusiliers), and Lieut. Simpson (2/8th Lancashire Fusiliers) were the other officers with the company.

The composite Battalion marched from Corbie to Warlusée-Abancourt, and then down the Amiens-St. Quentin Road until at midday we reached our Battalion transport which had just arrived and parked a little distance to the north of the main road, west of Proyart, where we met Capt. Cowan (our Transport officer), Capt. H. Wood (Quartermaster), Capt. C. W. James, and the Marquis d'Albon (the Brigade Interpreter), who gave us what news they had of the Battalion. Here the Battalion rested whilst Colonel Little rode over to Harbonnières, where he found Divisional Headquarters. He reported to General Malcolm and returned to us in the afternoon with orders to relieve the 199th East Lancashire Brigade. We fell in and marched through Bayonvillers to Harbonnières, meeting on our way a procession of refugees of both sexes and all ages and conditions streaming out of their village over which enemy shells were already bursting. Their misery and distress was obvious as they plodded along, all bowed down with bundles; the stronger ones pushing handcarts piled high with bedding, household furniture, and utensils.

As we marched through the village there was one shopkeeper still in possession who gave us his store of dates and apples. At dusk we took over the line east of Harbonnières from the 199th Brigade.

The village of Framerville, into which the Boche had penetrated, was our direct front; the main Amiens-St. Quentin Road was on our left flank. Here we were in touch with a machine gun post in a cluster of buildings at the Framerville-Proyart Road junction. Our right flank towards the village of Vauxvillers was in the air as troops with whom we should have been in contact fell back as we were taking up our position.

The main position was along a line of light railway and on a sunken road, and here we passed an anxious and disturbed night. During the night Lieut. J. N. Robinson strolled in. He had joined the Machine Gunners, who were holding the crossroads, on the previous

day ; and when he heard they were in touch with troops of the 66th Division he came over and joined his comrades of the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers.

At dawn the enemy were found to be strongly established in Vauxvillers and well round our right flank. Later our position was heavily shelled, and we were ordered to retire to a sunken road about 400 yards in rear. Companies were withdrawn by platoons. It was during this withdrawal that a humorous incident occurred. During the previous day's march our prospects were the subject of interested conjecture, and we all agreed that we were in for a hot time. This caused Lieut. Heydon to remark that the next best thing to hope for was a nice "Blighty," and that as he had already had one bullet through the arm he would like the next one through his leg for a change. His platoon was on the extreme right of our position, and when the company commander walked over to order the retirement, he was met by the platoon sergeant, who reported that Mr. Heydon had gone down wounded and that he had left a message saying that he had "got it" just where he wanted it.

The new position was taken up by midday, but our right flank still remained "in the air." Events followed rapidly. The troops on our left to the north of the main Amiens-St. Quentin Road were forced back, and we were left with both flanks exposed. Then on the left we saw a most inspiring sight. A strong counter-attack was delivered : the lines advanced finely in extended order some sixty yards or so, then halted and lay down ; their fire broke up the lines of advancing Boche, who were chased back over the slight ridge at the point of the bayonet. At the same time our artillery joined in, and the shells came right down on the enemy's supports. This spirited rally stopped any further enemy advance in that quarter for the remainder of the day.

At the same time another counter-attack was delivered on our right flank against Vauxvillers. The village was recaptured, but could not be held, and we had the mortification of seeing our men driven out again after suffering heavy loss. We learnt later that Lieut.-Col. Hurlbatt, who had previously commanded the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, was killed in this fighting.

Meanwhile, directly in front of us the enemy were advancing out of Framerville. We blazed away at their

machine gun teams as they doubled forward, but they were a difficult target and soon went to earth in the inequalities of ground and the high grass. From this cover they began to spray us with machine gun bullets, and at about three o'clock in the afternoon they had worked round our right flank and enfiladed the sunken road. It was all over in a minute—a swish of bullets and half the right company was killed or wounded. The survivors crawled to a bank on the side of the light railway and formed a defensive flank. The remainder of the line was protected by a dip in the sunken road, and we held the position until darkness fell, when the whole line was withdrawn to a system of trenches on the eastern outskirts of Harbonnières village, which formed part of the outer defences of Amiens. Great efforts were made to evacuate the wounded, but it was found impossible to get many away. All this night the sky was aglow with the blaze of burning ammunition and store dumps which had been fired by our troops as they withdrew.

During the night rations arrived and were distributed to companies in bulk. Before they could be divided, however, an urgent order came through for us to retire and get clear of the village before dawn, as we were hopelessly outflanked and the enemy was closing in on us from both north and south. As an illustration of this fact the following incident may be quoted :

During the previous day (March 27th) Lewis guns were brought up to Colonel Little's Battalion from Warfusée-Abancourt some four miles back, and the officer who brought them up, on his return to that village later in the day, found it in occupation of the Boche and was taken prisoner.

We "fell in" and marched through the streets of the wrecked and deserted village in the pale light of the breaking dawn and were clear of the last house before it was fully light. We reached Cayeux-en-Santerre (in the Luce valley) after a forced march by about 7 a.m. on March 28th, abandoning the precious rations in bulk when we could carry them no longer. When the enemy is hanging on your heels there is little inclination to "fall out," and in spite of the pace even the most exhausted managed to stay the course.

Arrived at Cayeux, we rested in a field and made up our depleted ranks from Divisional details and stragglers

there assembled, Capt. Potter absorbing into his company all men of the 197th (Fusilier Brigade).

The Battalion now marched off to take up a position on the railway line from Marcelcave to Wiencourt l'Équipée to assist in stemming the strong enemy attack which was being made from the north. On our way through the village we marched past Major-General Malcolm, who was severely wounded the next day at Domart. We took up our position by midday, but a confusion had occurred. We found that this part of the line was already defended by units of the 39th Division and that our energy (or what was left of it) would have been better employed in defending the line between Wiencourt and Guillaucourt as the Boche was streaming through this gap unchecked.

Anyhow, the 39th, with scant courtesy, ordered us off their battlefield, which we left rather disgruntled feeling like Henry VI. when he said :

For Margaret my Queen and Clifford too  
Have chid me from the battle, swearing both  
They prosper best of all when I am thence.

However, we were not in a position of such complete mental detachment to be able individually to follow the example set by his words.

Here on this mole hill will I sit me down.  
To whom God will, there will be victory.

In spite of temporary discouragement we were still keen to make our weight felt, if and when we were permitted.

We retreated across the valley of the River Luce through a wide tract of extremely marshy ground which threw us into considerable confusion, increased by shells bursting in the tree tops and bringing the poplars down about our ears. Eventually we took up a position on the high ground to the west of Cayeux village, scraped out some cover, lay down, and rested.

We were holding a good tactical position which commanded both the Luce valley and the village of Cayeux, but for the time being were more or less out of the picture, so we had an opportunity to look round and see how things were going. Fierce fighting was going on in the

direction of Wiencourt, and numbers of Germans were crawling about like beetles in the far distance. Nearer at hand, on the opposite side of the valley to the south, we could see mysterious figures wandering about. Our first impulse was to take pot shots at them on the supposition that they were Boche. Later we could make out the light blue uniforms of the French, and realised they were the forerunners of the long-expected reinforcements from the south.

It is extraordinary the effect some things produce on the mind. As we lay there the sight of shells forming hideous pits in the near cornfields and of shrapnel tearing and rending the budding trees inspired greater disgust and anger than the destruction of bricks and mortar, or even the loss of life had done on previous occasions. Nature seemed so innocent, so attractive, and so defenceless that the whole business seemed like the murder of a woman.

In the late afternoon firing died down and we had a period of comparative quiet. Colonel Little, who had gone off to Cayeux to find Brigade H.Q., returned with the disquieting news that the Brigade had gone, the Boche was working round both sides of us, and that every minute of delay lessened our chance of getting clear. (In the morning Colonel Little had received orders that in the event of a further withdrawal being necessary he was to withdraw southwards in the direction of Beaucourt.) After a personal reconnaissance he ascertained that this village was already in possession of the enemy, so it was then decided to withdraw west to Demuin.

The night march that followed was the most trying experience of all that period. The night was cold and wet—we were disheartened, exhausted, soaked, famished, chilled to the bone, and so tired that we actually slept as we marched. Our morale, too, began to show signs of wear and tear, and the Boche Very lights seemed to be shooting up all around; but Colonel Little brought us through to safety. After what seemed an eternity, but as a matter of cold fact, a little after midnight, we reached the village of Demuin, and found to our delight that it housed our Divisional Headquarters. The village had been deserted by its inhabitants during the day in such haste that everything had been left behind: there were eggs and even fowls for the killing. The knowledge that the Boche might take anything left over caused us to make

inroads into these stores fortified by the assurance that the rightful owners would be content to have it so. There were many jovial parties held that night when khaki and French blue gathered round the kitchen tables of Demuin.

On March 29th the Battalion, much refreshed by the rest and food, received orders to take up and organise a position in an existing system of trenches to the north of, and just outside, Demuin village, which stretched some 300 yards across the apex of the triangle of ground between the Villers Bretonneux and Marcelcave roads; this formed part of the inner defences of Amiens. We took up this position and remained there all day in support to the front line which held the higher ground extending from the valley of the Luce on the right to a point about midway to Villers Bretonneux on the left. The main German attack was threatened from the direction of Marcelcave.

The day was uneventful, and we made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit. The enemy troubled us very little: he seemed to be reorganising before making his final bid for Amiens. True, his artillery was doing a certain amount of material damage to the village, but we were clear of bricks and mortar, so that did not trouble us. During the afternoon several Boche 'planes flew over our position, but in spite of their low altitude we were unable to bring them down.

Brigadier-General Borritt paid us a visit and was complimentary and full of "buck," asking us if we did not infinitely prefer "a war of movement" to trench warfare. He was wounded the next day.

Lieut. Mackay joined us with others of the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, and we were especially delighted during the day to meet Major Dingley again. He had established his Aid Post in one of the last houses of the village. He was the only officer of the Battalion, with the exception of Capt. Wood, the Quartermaster, who came through "the show" from start to finish, and if ever any man earned a decoration for courage and devotion to duty he was that man, but often the worthiest never get their due reward.

Rations arrived and we fed well. As the day drew on it seemed exceedingly probable that we should pass the night where we were: so we resolved to make ourselves comfortable, and unofficial foraging parties found their way into the village and returned with a goodly supply of bed-

ding and blankets and such comforts in the shape of food and drink as had been overlooked the night before. It was in this connection that a private in "B" Company named Gilligan was thought to have evinced unexpected initiative in reporting a supply of "vin blanc" still remaining in the village which had escaped the eyes of the previous search parties. He was at once sent back with a comrade to bring in the booty, and the pair returned with two large ewers full to the brim with a beverage which, when tasted, proved to be the sourest cider a French orchard had ever produced.

The night passed without incident, and the morning of March 30th broke in peaceful fashion. The troops had settled down to a hasty breakfast when the "beastly" war started once again, and a hurricane bombardment came right down on our position.

Lieut. Robinson and Pte. Stokes were wounded by a shell which sent the rashers of bacon which they were cooking into the air.

It was just after this misfortune that Major Chesney arrived. (When the great German attack commenced he was in Field Hospital, and it was he who brought up the 800-900 "Crocks" from hospital which constituted Brigadier-General Carey's famous "Stop the gap force." After being with this force for a couple of days he learnt casually of the position of his own unit, and was given permission to join it. He was a great acquisition and took in hand the conduct of affairs.) Matters now began to move with startling rapidity. The enemy appeared on the high ground to the south-east of the village and soon began to enter the village in strength. One company of the composite Battalion was told off for its defence, and for a time succeeded in keeping the enemy out, but were eventually pressed back. Major Chesney sent Lieut. Simpson and one platoon to their support. They did remarkably well and laid out a Boche machine gun team. For this service Simpson was later awarded the M.C. Another platoon, under Lieut. Mackay, was also sent to protect our right flank, but it was soon cut off by the advancing enemy.

Meanwhile things were going very badly in the direction of Marcelcave; our front line troops, which were those of Carey's force, were driven off the high ground and fell back to our trenches, which were reorganised for further

resistance. Fighting then became very bitter: the enemy secured the high ground south of the village and also penetrated the village itself. From these positions we were enfiladed, but Colonel Little received orders to hang on as a counter-attack was to be launched by the Cavalry south of the village to regain the high ground and to take up an alignment with us. We were therefore tied down, but later in the day it was found that the counter-attack on our flank was not likely to develop, and orders were accordingly given us to withdraw to a ridge of higher ground about a mile in rear, on the line Hangard Wood-Villers Bretonneux.

To ensure a safe withdrawal, the C.O. decided first to clear Demuin of the enemy, and one of our companies, under Capt. Leask (Northumberland Fusiliers), was detailed to carry out the task. After severe fighting the village was retaken but this gallant officer lost his life in the effort.

This withdrawal was, nevertheless, a costly business, as the German machine guns caught us in the open as we crossed to the shelter of the sunken road leading from Demuin to Villers-Bretonneux.

The following extract from a letter written a month later by Lieut. C. H. Vines, who was wounded and taken prisoner at the time, bears eloquent testimony to the severity of the Boche machine gun fire:

Major Chesney gave me orders to get the men out and retire to a sunken road in the rear. I saw every one out and then tried to make good my own retreat, but came under machine gun fire. I was hit in the left arm (through the muscle), then a moment later through the left thigh, then in the back and out at the shoulder, lastly behind the left ear. I had made three attempts to get back, but was wounded afresh each time. My next recollections were of the inside of a German Field Hospital.

An attempt was made from the line of the sunken road to cover the retirement with Lewis guns, but the position was untenable as the enemy were able to enfilade it from Demuin village. It was when leaving this road in company with Major Robin (O.C. Divisional Machine Gun Company), and Capt. Potter, that Major Chesney was wounded; he was hit above the knee, but was able to

hobble along until out of machine gun fire when he consented to have the wound attended to, on conditions that during the process great deference was to be paid to his breeches for which he had recently given the sum of 45s. at the Ordnance Stores.

About this time Lieut. C. Dowson was severely wounded. By about two o'clock in the afternoon we had taken up a fresh position on the high ground above Hangard village on the line of a road which led to Villers-Bretonneux.

On our left in the neighbourhood of a wood which lay half-way towards Villers-Bretonneux a large force of cavalry seemed to be putting in some good work, and we were greatly relieved to learn that they were ours.

This position near Hangard is one of those spots in France most intimately connected with the 66th Division. Here, on that afternoon, rallied all those that were left of the Division after ten days of incessant fighting, to form the last barrier between the German hordes and Amiens.

Lancashire Fusiliers, East Lancashires, Manchesters, Engineers, Machine Gunners, 5th Borders, were all intermingled. Brigadier-General A. J. Hunter (199th Brigade) had assumed command of the Division, and was there to put heart into us along with Brigadier-General G. C. Williams (198th Brigade), Colonels Whitehead, Woodcock, Little, Norton, and Heselton.

It was here that we saw Lieut. E. Mead, who had come through the fighting from the start and was in an extreme state of mental and physical exhaustion. Poor fellow, after all his fighting experiences of the last ten days he was mortally wounded less than an hour after. To add to our discomfort the weather became much colder, with biting blasts of driving rain.

About 3 p.m. General Williams gave orders for a counter-attack which was to regain the line of the Demuin-Villers Bretonneux road.

The following extract from a letter written by Capt. Potter to his mother deals with the final stage in this stupendous struggle :

I was on the right of the second wave in the attack and in a state of absolute "funk": the lads spread out in extended order and advanced steadily over ground which gave little or no cover. I helped

myself along by repeating under by breath the words of "Jesu, Lover of my Soul." We got well forward with but few casualties until we came up with our front line which was held up under cover of a low bank and hedge by heavy machine gun fire in front. Meanwhile the attack on our left was getting well forward. A lead was wanted, so I started on again and six men followed me. Seeing us coming and thinking that the whole line was about to advance, a party of about thirty Boche began to stream away from a bank, about fifty yards on our left, towards the village of Demuin. This made us fearfully excited, and we followed them, taking pot shots and cursing and swearing at those behind us to follow. Then the Boche machine gun fire got us and six out of the seven went down. Fortunately I had only got plugged through the water bottle, and with the other unwounded survivor—Private Farrington (8th L.F.), took shelter in a shell hole, taking with us a wounded officer, also of the 8th Lancashire Fusiliers.

Here we did not feel at all comfortable, as we could see that there were still some Boche behind the bank on the left, and our own fellows could not join up with us as the enemy machine guns caught them each time they made the attempt. Judge, then, of our delight when the Boche came out into the open and signalled they wished to surrender. Looking as truculent as circumstances would allow, Farrington and I went over and took them in charge. There was one N.C.O. and three privates, one of whom was wounded. Meanwhile our counter-attack on the left, after an advance of about 2,000 yards, had reached a forward slope swept by such a volume of machine gun fire that it was impassable, and the attack was gradually forced back, having suffered severe casualties. We, therefore, along with our prisoners, joined the main body. The enemy, however, had found out that there was still some little kick left in us, and we were allowed to take up our former position unmolested. I received permission from Colonel Little to take the prisoners down to Divisional Headquarters, and with Ptes. Farrington and Kershaw acting as escort, started for Cachy, where we got some tea from a Canadian Field Kitchen, and also got an

M.O. to look at our wounded Boche. We were bucked to find that our prisoners were not at all elated at the German successes mainly because they had received no rations for three days. (How true it is that an army travels on its stomach.) It was during this halt that Kershaw came up to me and asked what I had got from our prisoners. I told him that I had taken a shoulder strap and the cockades out of their forage caps. He replied: "They have given me two of their watches, sir." Of course, if a prisoner wishes to give his goods away there is nothing in Military Law to stop him, and I took no official action in the matter. We learnt at Cachy that Divisional Headquarters were at Boves, and I chartered an empty lorry that was passing, and we went down in comfort. It was a great pleasure as we jolted along to pass Battalion after Battalion marching up and to realise that the enemy had lost for all time the main object of his great offensive—Amiens. We handed over our prisoners to the Intelligence Officer at D.H.Q., and were received hospitably (the phrase seems remarkably familiar.—Ed.) They gave me the best of food and drink, and the welcome news that the Division were being withdrawn from the Line that night, and that I could go off for a good night's sleep and report to the 6th L.F. Transport line, which were already in the town, in the morning.

When the roll call of the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers was called at Longeau on the morning of March 31st, of the 33 officers and 753 other ranks who formed the fighting strength of the Unit on March 21st, only 1 officer and 80 other ranks remained. These figures speak for themselves.

The Battalion's casualties during the 10 days of fighting were as follows:

#### OFFICERS :

Lieut.-Col. E. S. Hurlbatt	Killed
Major F. A. H. Bealey ...	Wounded and Prisoner.
	Died in Germany shortly before the Armistice.
Capt. J. R. Cameron ... ...	Killed
2/Lt. A. Wilson ... ... ...	"
2/Lt. J. D. A. Bell ... ...	"

2/Lt. W. A. Benson	...	...	Killed
2/Lt. A. L. Clarke	...	...	"
2/Lt. J. B. McCabe	...	...	"
2/Lt. T. P. Miller	...	...	"
2/Lt. J. Sutherland	...	...	"
2/Lt. E. Mead	...	...	Died of Wounds
2/Lt. I. Skene, M.C.	...	...	" " "
Capt. J. L. Lee, M.C.	...	...	Wounded and Prisoner
Capt. J. S. Barker	...	...	" " "
2/Lt. C. H. Vines	...	...	" " "
Capt. F. Chesnutt-Chesney	...	...	Wounded
Capt. H. C. Gill	...	...	"
Capt. D. Gray	...	...	"
Lieut. W. H. Prince	...	...	"
Lieut. C. W. Morrow	...	...	"
Lieut. V. N. Levi	...	...	"
Lieut. E. H. Parsons	...	...	"
2/Lt. J. B. Gartside, M.C.	...	...	"
2/Lt. E. Bowden	...	...	"
2/Lt. F. Heydon	...	...	"
2/Lt. A. Dowson	...	...	"
2/Lt. A. Inglis	...	...	"
2/Lt. A. F. Stoker	...	...	"
2/Lt. J. N. Robinson	...	...	"
2/Lt. R. Truesdale	...	...	"
Major T. J. Biddolph	...	...	Prisoner
Major W. Wike	...	...	"
Capt. L. M. Robinson, M.C.	...	...	"
Lieut. C. Gray	...	...	"
Lieut E. Ormerod	...	...	"
2/Lt. H. Hewitt	...	...	"
2/Lt. V. B. Delany	...	...	"
2/Lt. D. R. Mackay	...	...	"
2/Lt. H. T. Smith	...	...	"
2/Lt. C. R. Curtis	...	...	"

#### OTHER RANKS.

Killed	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	80
Wounded and Missing	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	404
Wounded	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	145

In the list of killed there is the name of one officer who had been with the Battalion from the start—Major F. A. H. Bealey. His debonair figure, engaging presence,

and charming personality will always be remembered with the greatest affection by his surviving comrades.

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In view of the mist of uncertainty and doubt which hangs over the activities of the Third and Fifth British Armies at this period the reader will be able to see from the foregoing account that with regard to our Battalion and the other Battalions of the Division, we were not a disorganised mob fleeing for our lives.

To any officer or man who took any active part in the Great Retreat it is exceedingly galling to read or hear any aspersion cast upon the fighting qualities of the Fifth Army. We are zealous for its honour, for that of the 66th Division, and for the honour of our fallen comrades. We are sure that if every Unit in that Army could collect its evidence over a period of years as we had done in this book it would be found that they had quite as glorious a fighting record against enormous odds as that which we claim for our own Battalion.

Hence, no apologies are given from quoting various authorities to show that at least some are satisfied with the part the Division played in the fight for Amiens.

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Extract from the "Times History of the War," Volume XVIII. P. 98 :

The 66th Division at Framerville restored the fight.

P. 192 :

March 30th, towards the evening the advance of the 66th Division and the 3rd Australian Division (Major-General Sir J. Monash, K.C.B.) drove back the Germans.

Extract.—5th Army in March, 1918. Sparrow, p. 101 :

The 66th Division fought continuously from dawn March 21st until the night March 30-31st, and its casualties, counting also the spent and sick, were perhaps the heaviest of any. On the sixth day the 66th were so short of officers that its depleted companies were merely improvised small teams, but they held on with a grip little slackened, as though the





fighting was as natural to them as that automatic panting of their lungs that gained for them air enough to keep them alive. Even when they seemed to be far gone in locomotor ataxy they contrived to make good hobbling counter strokes as on the afternoon of March 30th.

Perhaps the best episodes of their fighting were :

- (1) On March 21st a cavalry counter-attack to Carpeza copse and the holding of the copse until a withdrawal on the second day.
- (2) The recovery east and north-east of Hervilly at 11 a.m. on March 22nd, which at the right moment delayed the German advance to the Peronne Bridge Head at Nobescourt Farm.
- (3) Holding the exits of Peronne and the village of Biaches (this in conjunction with the 39th Division).
- (4) Harbonnières, invaluable as well as memorably picturesque, and
- (5) the last spurt in a counter blow near Hangard, when its fagged men advanced as far as a Brigade of fresh Australians and forgot afterwards to blow their own trumpets. Their total casualties were nearly 7,000, apart from sick and spent.

(Actual casualties : Officers 379. Other ranks 6,989.—Ed.)

Extract from "The British Campaign in France and Flanders":

January to July, 1918. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle:

March 30th. On this evening several of those heroic Units which had fought themselves to the last point of human endurance from the beginning of the battle were taken from the stage where they played so glorious and tragic a part. The remains of the 39th, 50th, 16th, and 66th were all drawn back for reorganisation. It was theirs to take part in what was a defeat and a retreat, but their losses are a measure of their endurance, and the ultimate verdict of history upon their performance lies in one single undeniable fact that the Germans could never pass them.

Speaking of these troops an observer remarked : "They had been fighting for nine days, but were very cheerful and full of vigour."

The losses of some Units and the exertions of the individuals who composed them can seldom have been matched in warfare.

The 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, for example, had fought in the rearguard of the 66th Division for the whole of the retreat. They were now reduced to about a hundred men.

Major-General Sir Neill Malcolm, C.B., D.S.O., the Divisional Commander of the 66th Division during these eventful March days, stated at the Sixth Annual Reunion Dinner of the 66th Division :

My own command, as you know, was very short, and was marked by that great retreat of March, 1918. The Division which I handed over to General Bethell was very different from that which I had taken over from General Lawrence. We had lost many fine comrades : the casualties had been very, very heavy. We had fought, I think, longer than any other Division in the Army, and our casualties had been heavier, but I well remember General Bethell coming to see me in hospital. He had taken over but a short time, but, like a good friend and a good comrade, he came to me on the first opportunity, and this is what he said so far as I can remember : "When I came to take command I expected to find something shattered, something really done for which would be no use for a long time. Instead of that I find a very weak Division but one with the spirit unbroken which will build up in a very short time."

Well, those were the words of a fine soldier, and I think that you proved very shortly how right he was. It was wonderful, really, that a Division passing through the experience which you had had should have come out as it did. Units were still formed Units, and were ready to absorb reinforcements and train them and make them what your yourselves had been. I met German officers afterwards (General Malcolm was Chief of the British Military Mission in Berlin after the Armistice) who had been in the attack.

General Von Luttwitz, whom I knew very well, afterwards told me a great deal about those days and what the trials and difficulties had been on their side. We realised and they realised what the British Army had done, because the attack Ludendorff put up was one of the finest military performances of the war. It was a marvel of organisation, and those misty days favoured him. He has told me the story himself, and the way the British Army fought excited more admiration in Germany, I think, than it did in this country. I knew afterwards a good many of the German officers who had fought against us and I know what they say about it and what they think about it.

The general opinion that the remnant of the Battalion had after these ten days of fighting might best be summed up in a slightly altered version of a popular contemporary refrain, which was actually sung by men as they marched away from the scenes of their prowess :

We don't care a pill  
For Kaiser Bill,  
The poor old beggar must be barmy,  
And we don't care a cough  
For old Ludendorff,  
And all his bleeding army.

(The next lines were spoken very deliberately and with great feeling) :

BUT

We have a wholesome respect  
For his artillery and machine guns.

The Battalion Honours obtained during the fighting were :

Capt. C. H. Potter	...	...	Bar to M.C.
Capt. J. S. Barker	...	...	M.C.
R.S.M. Watkins	...	...	D.C.M.
240837 Sgt. W. Henry	...		Military Medal.
241886 Cpl. E. Hoyle	...	"	"
241003 A/Sgt. W. Ashworth		"	"
242857 L/Sgt. R. K. Taylor		"	"
242222 L/C. W. J. Rimmer		"	"

In terminating the account of the fighting during those ever memorable days in March, 1918, the following notes dealing with scenes behind the German lines on March

22nd will be of interest. They are supplied by Capt. J. L. Lee, who was wounded and taken prisoner on that day. He writes :

It was possible only for one who had seen both sides of the Firing Line to realise the tremendous superiority in numbers possessed by the enemy. To be at one moment one of a party of thirty or forty weary men, without any hope of supports, endeavouring to hold at bay a whole German battalion of fresh troops, and at the next a wounded prisoner in the hands of this overwhelming enemy was an experience which caused one to think that the British Line must be pierced. The waves of advancing troops passed on, and later, when ordered to move forward behind the lines, I passed Battalion after Battalion drawn up under cover awaiting their turn to assault, and in close support of this attacking infantry were light field guns and guns of a trench mortar type mounted on wheels and drawn by ponies. Further to the rear were column after column of heavier guns moving forward at the trot, Battalions of Infantry moving forward in fours almost at the double; all these gave the impression that they were fresh troops who had not been in action for some time. The village of Hargicourt was a hive of industry, and it seemed as if transport lines and supply dumps were established there. Many parties of Huns were to be seen gathered round boiling stew pots. Incidentally the origin of the meat for these stews was obvious, as steaks had been cut from the rump of every freshly killed horse that lay about. After leaving the village the road from Hargicourt to Bellicourt presented an extraordinary sight. The road itself was occupied on the one side by a stream of walking wounded and ambulances, which gave testimony to the number of casualties inflicted on the Hun in his advance, whilst on the other side moving in an opposite direction was an uninterrupted stream of transport and guns. On the grass on either side of the road marched the infantry; fresh troops, Battalion after Battalion moving forward in an unending column of route.

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A further account of experiences behind the lines will be found in the appendix.

## CHAPTER IX.

## MOVES AND COUNTERMOVES.

On March 31st, 1918, the survivors of the Battalion under Capt. C. H. Potter, M.C., marched to billets at Seux, some ten miles west of Amiens. Here we found the remaining Units of the Brigade, which, in regard to numbers, were in a similar plight to ourselves.

We remained there for three days, the daylight hours of which were fully occupied in reorganisation and re-equipment.

It is said that "consciousness of duty performed brings music at midnight." In any case, we slept so soundly that we were not in a state to catch the strains of nocturnal music that might have been floating about; still, in our waking hours we were conscious of a subtle feeling of contentment which, intermingled though it was with sorrow for the loss of so many gallant comrades, still gave pleasure to our toil and a sense of exhilaration. In short, using the well-worn military phrase, "Our morale was excellent." Corps Army and G.H.Q. combined to encourage this exalted state of mind by bearing congratulatory testimony to the manner in which the 60th Division had conducted itself and the value of the service rendered throughout the Retreat.

During our sojourn at Seux we received considerable additions to our strength. 2/Lt. B. Snowden returned from Paris leave and was made Adjutant. Lieuts. Wallace and Robertson returned from English leave, and 2/Lt. Somerville from a machine gun course. A considerable number of N.C.O.'s and men rejoined from English leave, or returned from hospital, whilst a certain number of reinforcements arrived. Our strength was now 5 officers and some 300 other ranks.

At the same time reorganisation was also proceeding rapidly throughout the whole Division. Major-General H. K. Bethell, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., was now in command of the Division, vice Major-General Sir Neill Malcolm,

C.B., D.S.O. (severely wounded), and Brigadier-General L. L. Wheatley, D.S.O., was appointed to the command of our Brigade (197th) in place of Brigadier-General O. C. Borritt, D.S.O. (wounded).

The 66th Division throughout its existence was extraordinarily fortunate in its Divisional Commanders. Generals Lawrence, Malcolm, and Bethell were officers who secured both the confidence and the affectionate regard of all ranks who served under them.

On April 3rd the Battalion entrained and proceeded northwards, detraining at Longpré in the Abbeville area, and marching to billets in the village of Vauchelles-les-Quesnoy. At this place Major G. P. Pollitt, D.S.O. (R.E.), who had just arrived in France from the Senior Officers' Course at Aldershot, joined the Battalion as C.O. Capt. Potter became second-in-command. The next day the Battalion marched through Abbeville to billets in Buigny St. Maclou.

On April 7th Major Pollitt was cross-posted as second-in-command of the 5th Border Regiment, and Captain Potter reassumed command.

We left Buigny on April 8th and marched through the charming old town of St. Riquier to billets in the adjacent village of Le Festel, where Major Pollitt returned to the Battalion as C.O. These kaleidoscopic changes of command were symptomatic of the exigencies and uncertainties of this trying period when the British Army was fighting with "its back to the wall," and were evidence of the frequency with which field officers at that time became casualties when their places had to be filled temporarily from the nearest Unit.

April 13th saw the Battalion moved again, and we marched into billets in the village of Ailly le haut Clocher (pronounced Aley-lee-howt-Clocker by those privileged to have been born in Lancashire). This move coincided with the most critical period of the German Spring Offensive. Held in front of Amiens, he struck again between Arras and Ypres. The First Army threw back his columns and the great bastion of Vimy remained in our hands. Further to the north, between La Bassée Canal and Armentieres, the enemy struck also with fierce energy. Round about Bethune in the area very familiar to us a kindred Division, the 55th West Lancashire Division, threw back the enemy with great loss;

but other Divisions were absolutely overwhelmed, and column after column of the enemy poured through the gap. It was March 21st over again with a quicker moving enemy. We were directly threatened with the loss of the Channel ports, and this practically meant the loss of the war.

This new offensive commenced on April 9th and lasted until April 29th. It was a time of anxiety and for the greater part of the period the outcome of the struggle was in "the lap of the gods." The enemy was straining every nerve and exerting every ounce of force to obtain a favourable decision. The 66th Division was still so reduced in strength that it could no longer serve as a Division; so from its depleted Units a composite Brigade was formed under the command of Brigadier-General A. J. Hunter (198th Brigade), to be held in reserve for use in the last extremity.

The Brigade consisted of three Battalions. Each Battalion contained the survivors of the former Brigade and each company in the Battalion represented its original Unit.

The Fusilier Battalion was composed of a company of the 6th L.F., 2/7th L.F., 2/8th L.F. Capt. Potter was in command of the 6th L.F. company, and with him were Lieuts. Wallace, Robertson, and 2/Lt. Somerville. The C.O. of this composite Battalion was Lieut.-Col. B. A. Smith (South Notts Hussars), and his second-in-command Major L. B. L. Seckham (2nd Lancashire Fusiliers).

The days that followed saw great activity in this composite force. Battalion and company had to be organised and many a likely lad went through all the grades from private to sergeant in less than twenty-four hours. Re-equipment was carried out as far as ingenuity reconciled supply and demand. Section, platoon, and company training was carried on with a thoroughness engendered by the thought that lives might well depend on the use to which we put these few hours of training.

Whilst members of the composite Brigade were thus employed the remaining personnel of the Battalions and other Units of the Division were formed under their respective commanding officers into Training Cadres. These were composed for the most part of the pick of the N.C.O.'s, and were destined to be used in the near future in connection with the training of Units of the American Army on arrival in France.

On April 14th the Battalion Training Cadre, under the command of Lieut.-Col. Pollitt, left Ailly and marched to billets in the hamlet of L'Heure on the banks of the Somme. Lieuts. Wallace and Robertson, and 2/Lt. Somerville went with the Cadre.

The feeling of Capt. Potter, on being left to carry on with two unknown officers, had best not be recorded. However, the military situation brightened, as a definite front had now been established, and on April 21st the composite force was disbanded. The 6th L.F. company marched to Longpré the next day, and proceeded by rail to St. Omer, joining the remainder of the Battalion at Longuenesse.

During our stay here Capt. A. S. C. Fothergill (who had been in England on a special tour of duty), and Capt. T. McAra (3/5th L.F.) joined the Battalion.

A final selection was made of those who were to form the Battalion Training Cadre, which was composed as follows :

- (1) BATTALION H.Q., comprising :  
C.O., Adjutant, Quartermaster, Intelligence, Gas, Transport and Lewis Gun Officers, Battalion Sergeant-Major, Battalion Q.M.S., Orderly Room Sergeant, Transport, Quartermasters Stores, Signallers and Mess personnel.
- (2) 4 COMPANY CADRES, each comprising :  
Company Officer, Company Sergeant-Major, C.Q.M.S., Lewis Gun, Musketry, Bombing, Physical Instruction, Bayonet Fighting Sergeants, and other specialist N.C.O.'s.

A total numerical strength of 60 to 80 all told.

The general selection for final places in the Cadre caused much heart-burning. It was no light task for the C.O. to select his officers in the first place, but the task of the specialist officer in selecting N.C.O.'s who were likely to make efficient instructors was still harder.

Owing to heavy military burden of the recent heavy fighting, appeals had been made to America to expedite her entry into the field. General Pershing received instructions from his Government to place his troops at the disposal of the Allies in British and French areas, and these troops were trained and equipped according to the

nationality of the trainers. The placing of foreign troops, especially American, under the jurisdiction—one cannot say command—of British officers, called for the sacrifice of a large amount of national self-esteem on the part of the politician in America. The writers of this book, however, could enlighten American politicians and probably some British ones by informing them what certain British and American officers were going to do if the General Reserve, of which the attached American troops formed a part, had been brought into action. However, our instructions from the highest authorities were to make the Americans welcome and really build up a bond of solid friendship behind the line; to remember that America stood for efficiency and to be efficient ourselves. Hence, no officer, N.C.O., or man was appointed to the Cadre who had not months and months of war experience behind his training qualifications. Unfortunately a number of our experts were not able to be taken on the Cadre strength, as their mode of explanation, pronunciation, and articulation was not of such a nature as could be fully comprehended by the Americans. For instance, a little more variety of language was required from a Lewis Gun instructor when taking a squad than the following: "This ere fits into that theere, tha' knows, like this 'ere." (proceeding to adjust the mechanism and finding it stiff) "By gum, but it's one o' them there, tha' knows."

When the selection was complete there remained 298 other ranks who were surplus to the Cadre establishment, and who had to be transferred to the Base. You can imagine the feelings of those concerned. "Esprit de Corps" is a reality, its value is incalculable, but it is a plant of slow growth and peculiarly liable to wilt under adverse circumstances.

Some of the 298 were comrades who had been with us since the old Southport days—they, of course, felt the severance most acutely, but each one concerned felt it in many ways. We have met again since at reunions, and have heard of the bitterness which those felt who marched away from the old Battalion to entrain for their journey to the Base, where they were scattered and sent to strange Units.

"Omelettes cannot be made without the breaking of eggs," and the Great War caused a frequent splitting up of Battalions, but each time such a thing occurred there

was a great loss of "Esprit de Corps," and it is certain, in this particular instance, however well these 298 men might do their individual duty wherever they were sent, they would have done better service if they could have remained together as part of the old Battalion. The turning of the 66th Division into training Cadres may have been the only way of preserving its existence in such a condition that it could rapidly reform into a fighting Division at a later date, but the cost of doing this fell very heavily on those who were sent away from their old Units as "Surplus."

The Americans had not arrived yet, and after the majority of the Battalion had been drafted to the Base it was decided to send all the officers and N.C.O. instructors to the 2nd Army School of Instruction at Wisques.

On April 24th Capts. Potter, Fothergill, and McAra, Lieuts. Wallace and Robinson, together with R.S.M. Watkins and the rest of the N.C.O.'s, marched from Longuenesse to Wisques. Other Units of the 66th Division had sent their quota, and an advance party of American officers were also at the school.

The week that followed was delightful. The amount of instruction absorbed was negligible, but if the course were regarded as a Divisional Reunion, or a period of relaxation, it was an unqualified success.

The accommodation provided was excellent, the school being housed in a large derelict monastery. The weather was cold and dull but parades and lectures were kept within reasonable limits and the evenings given over to revelry.

Whilst the majority of the Cadre were thus pleasantly employed, Colonel Pollitt and the remainder changed their headquarters by route march from Longuenesse to Belle (near Boulogne). Here Capt. H. Wood, the Quartermaster, was left in charge of the detachment, and the Colonel and Adjutant proceeded to the H.Q. of the 40th Division at Ryveld, where they were detailed to supervise Chinese labour in the construction of a line of trenches between Herzeele and Winnezeele.

On completion of the course of instruction at the 2nd Army School the members of the Cadre were taken by motor bus to Belle. Capt. A. M. Cowan, our Transport officer, left to take up a similar position with the Heavy Artillery, and another link in the old chain was

broken. Our former Quartermaster, Lieut. C. W. James, had also left us and proceeded to the Labour Corps.

Colonel Pollitt and the Adjutant returned from their sojourn among the "Chinks," and early next day the Cadre marched to Desvres and entrained.

"After a tiring and uneventful journey we detrained at Noyelles-sur-Somme and marched to billets at Lancheres."

The last few lines are from the Adjutant's entry in the War Diary.

This officer had not been to the "refresher" or refreshing course at Wisques. (This Wisques has a most refreshing sound if properly pronounced. Capt. McAra, with his home in the Bray o' Menzies, was the only one able to do full justice to the word, although others tried their best.)

The following account of the same journey is by one who had been on "the refresher course" at Wisques:

At 8 a.m. on a perfect day in May, when all the countryside had made answer to "the breezy call of incense breathing morn," when the birds were singing and the sun working wonders on apple blossom and lilac amid the fresh slight feathery green of the trees, we fell in and marched away through open country and forest. A French forest has a character of its own; it seems rather planned than planted, and planned, too, in the grand manner so that the sense of extent and height is enhanced. It is full of axial lines, vistas, and dignity. The way through that forest on this particular morning was beautiful and the sense of spring in the air increased the blitheness of our hearts. By midday we arrived at the town of Desvres, and pending the advent of our train, sought the pleasant solace of the estaminets near the railway station. It was the sort of day when it seemed right to act leisurely and our train conformed to this spirit. We left Desvres about 2 p.m. and jogged placidly along with occasional glimpses of the sea until at 7 p.m. we detrained at Noyelles-sur-Mer, at the mouth of the Somme. We crossed the tidal estuary by means of the raised roadway, and passing over the canalised river itself entered the little town of St. Valery-sur-Somme. It was getting dusk as we

marched through the streets. We halted on the quay side in front of what appeared to be a coal factor's office. Here in the wall was a tablet advising all and sundry that from this spot William of Normandy set sail for the conquest of England. It is not surprising that the town which had seen such scenes and also been so intimately connected with Edward III., the Black Prince, and Crecy, turned but a sleepy eye upon a Territorial Cadre off to train Americans.

It was dark before we cleared the town, and as we marched mile after mile along the dusty road the stars came out and the mysterious throaty rattle caused by the croaking of innumerable frogs accompanied us for miles. Feeling very tired, we arrived at Lancheres at 11 p.m., and with a minimum of delay found our allotted billets, consumed a meal, and lay down to sleep the "sleep of the just."

The authors can hear the authentic son of Mars snorting and ejaculating "Damme, but I thought this was a War History, and here's a fellow drivelling on about May mornings and forests and twilight and frogs."

They reply with the soft answer that during the two and a half years it has taken to collect the material for this book it has been necessary to resort to all kinds of subterfuge to obtain copy and if this contributor had been pulled up "too sharply" he might not have contributed more. But we did give him a gentle hint not to offend again.

We remained at Lancheres from May 3rd to May 9th, and whilst a certain amount of training went on we were for the most part marking time until the arrival of the American troops. On May 9th we marched to fresh billets in the village of Bourseville, and Lieut. D. V. McLachlan joined the Battalion. The American troops had not arrived but we had attached to us an American supply officer—a single swallow (happy word)—to herald the approach of summer, and we were all agog with expectation.

For "The Yanks are Coming."

Later, when American troops did arrive with magnificent military bands this song "Over there" became the Dough boys' "Tipperary." Our men sang it, too, on the march,

and to the great amusement of the American troops, they sang :

For the Yanks are coming,  
A *long time* coming.  
So it seems to those "over here."

But everything comes to him who waits.

## CHAPTER X.

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WITH THE AMERICANS.

The period of some three months from the beginning of May to the end of July, during which we were associated with units of the American Expeditionary Force, afforded us a very pleasant interlude in the serious work of campaigning. Our duties during these weeks of training were of an advisory and instructional nature. Each officer and man of the British Division held a similar position in the American Division and was always on hand when his American opposite number asked for advice.

The whole of the 66th Division was formed into these training Cadres, with the exception of the Divisional Artillery, which remained in action in the Bethune and Armentieres sectors. Later in the year it joined the reformed 66th Division at Le Cateau.

Each American Division remained with us for about three weeks, after which time it passed on into the line, and a new Division took its place.

An important part of the general training was directed towards the improvement in mobility of American units which arrived overburdened with all sorts of wonderful impedimenta. American officers told the writers that on numerous occasions it had been pointed out to the authorities in the States that there was no need for the large supply of linen, boots, and clothing which each American officer had to bring overseas.

Anyway, stratagem had to be resorted to in order to break down the baggage problem (which was as galling to the ordinary American regimental officer as to the British advisor).

It was found that American transport was in the habit of making double journeys to bring up the excess baggage, so a few route marches were undertaken which made the horses fairly tired. Then to the consternation of every one not in the know, early one morning we marched away to an unknown destination. The distance covered

amounted to about twenty-three miles. After a day's rest we got on the move again. This thoroughly separated the officer and his surplus kit for good and all. Very soon afterwards the American Higher Command had the kit collected from where it had been dumped and placed in store in Calais.

We still have very pleasant recollections of the Americans themselves, both as soldiers and as boon companions. Their physique was excellent and their keenness beyond doubt. After they had got to know us their friendliness was genuine and was coupled with a certain diffidence and lack of bombast which was unexpected.

There was, of course, on both sides, in ways and modes of speech a certain touch of strangeness which was only natural seeing that the ranks of an American unit contained the offspring of every European nation, some of whom were unable to speak English.

On one occasion the writer received a message from an American scout he had sent out. It was written in German!

The canvas gaiter, most probably a useful adjunct in arid Texas, was certainly not the right article for muddy Flanders. The rolled packs and portable tents were also not designed for the Western Front.

At times it was necessary to keep a strict eye on the jocular Lancastrians who saw nothing but humour in the equipment of our American Allies.

The dentist, with his dental chair and workshop, was humorous; the priceless one pounder batteries drawn by raw boned mules, and the team of gaunt faced solemn towering giants walking on either side of the toy cannon were received with applause, and caused one man from the neighbourhood of Littleborough to remark: "If 'a had me clogs on aw could punce hell out o' one of them." Yet the Yanks declared it might be very useful against a "Pill Box."

Their ideas of "March discipline" were not ours, and the gravity and ceremony of their salute had certainly a touch of seventeenth century politeness which made it a real salute. Again, the universal use of the word "hike"; their "1st privates"; their "transportation," and other terms of speech sounded very quaint. Their cumbrous phrase, "Those G— d—d sons of bitches" used when they referred to the enemy was quickly converted to the

British Tommy's B—y Boche; their pay days with the accompanying dice throwing; their base ball matches—all these and similar instances and inconsequences come back as one recalls those pleasant days.

You can, "in the mind's ear, Horatio," still hear them singing as they march along the country roads:

All we have to do is sign the Pay Roll,  
All we have to do is sign the Pay Roll,  
All we have to do is sign the Pay Roll,  
And we don't draw a G— D— cent.

It sounds silly and feeble, so does the British song which was sung to the same tune:

"They were only playing leap-frog,"

yet in the ranks of their respective armies, these songs, like "old soldiers," will never die, and the chorus of the marching song of the American Civil War will appear again whenever British or American troops take the field.

On the 12th, Lieut.-Col. G. P. Pollitt, D.S.O., proceeded to the 25th Division to take command of the 11th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, Capt. Potter, M.C., resuming command of the Battalion.

Early on the 16th Capt. Potter proceeded to Eu to meet the 2nd Battalion 325th Infantry Regiment of the American Expeditionary Force.

The march from Eu to Bourseville proved to be a very trying one for the Americans. They were a Southern Division from "Alabama, Tennessee, and Caroline," and had been many weeks on the journey too tightly packed for exercise.

Their long packs and tightly fitting tunics did not help them on this sweltering hot day. The British Company Commanders met the Commanders of the American Companies they had been allotted to, and as quickly as possible a good meal was served which was greatly appreciated by the Americans.

Before the arrival of our American Allies, all ranks of the Division had been duly advised that they must take every opportunity of cementing the friendship of the nations and that on no account give cause for the slightest offence.

We considered that a good start could be made by entertaining the whole of the American officers to lunch. It was a dry day and they came from a dry country. As anyone knows who made the campaigns in France it is unsafe to drink the water of the country unless chlorinated. You can't cement the friendship of nations in chlorinated water, so it was decided to give them a real Allied welcome. Wines of France, Vermuth of Italy, Whisky of Scotland, Beer of England, together with a special consignment of food specially purchased in Abbeville. One stalwart specimen helped himself to a tumblerful of Vermuth and gulped it down. His eye caught that of a British officer who suggested another. This followed the first with the remark, "Sure, but that's real good."

That lunch delivered the Americans into our hands, and we became the firmest friends. Scales were removed from the eyes of both Americans and British. We found that these Americans had none of the cocksureness and egotism which the modern novel portrays: officers and men were simple and unaffected and the very opposite to boastful.

As the weeks went on the Americans said that they had misjudged us when at home. They wanted to know why they had not been informed our Army was such a good one, our equipment so perfect, and that our county regiments contained as good fighting material as was to be found in the Canadian and Australian Forces.

Their verdict was that we had been too modest. The Americans were given two days' rest with sea bathing before commencing serious training.

On the 20th May Lieut.-Col. E. P. Nares, M.C. (the Cheshire Regiment) took command of the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, and training in earnest followed. The newcomers were green but keen, they worked hard and made rapid and real progress. There is no doubt that they were keen to get to know all we could teach them and then try their knowledge on the enemy. Short instructional courses for the American N.C.O.'s in Lewis Gun, Bombing, Scouting, Physical Training, Bayonet Fighting, Musketry, Gas, and even Cooking were commenced. The American Company Commander found that when he had detailed all the necessary N.C.O.'s and men to the various courses, he had very little company left, and, like his

British brother, under similar circumstances, consigned the specialist to perdition.

On May 22nd the Battalion Cadre marched to Woignarue, previously occupied by the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers, and were attached to the 3rd Battalion 325th Infantry Regiment A.E.F. This Battalion was commanded by Major Pierce, a New York solicitor.

Two of our officers were strolling down the village street one day when they met the American Town Major. Remembering carefully the instructions of making a good impression on all and sundry of our American friends they promptly invited him to the mess for a drink. He gratefully assented. American messes were dry, but the majority of the Americans we met were only abstainers through force of circumstances.

On arrival at the mess three good "pegs" were poured out and a suspicion of soda water added to each. The American drank with relish, and setting down his glass exclaimed, "Gee, but this sure is fine stuff," to which one of his hosts replied, at the same time showing him the bottle, "Yes, it's Haig and Haig. Sir Douglas Haig's firm, you know." This brought the surprising rejoinder from the American, "My, you don't say! Reckon I always allowed he was some soldier, but I did not know he ran a saloon."

The Financial Department of the American Army was very slow in commencing operations, and all ranks found themselves in straitened circumstances. Every expedient known was tried in order to raise money. Small French children began to appear with boots many sizes too big for them. British Tommies shaved with gold-plated Gillette razors. Silk socks were common, and several shirts appeared as blouses. Soon these things became a drug on the market and by a curious coincidence, at the same time an order was issued which stated that "Several cases of British soldiers buying articles of American kit have been reported. This is contrary to all regulations and must cease forthwith."

June 1st saw us on the road again, and in conjunction with the American Battalion we marched to Montieres. The Americans went under canvas, and we occupied the chateau—a delightful old place with fine grounds.

The Officers' Mess was in a room that was part Conservatory and part Smoke Room. Madame, the owner,

was a fine type of the French aristocrat. Two of her sons had been killed in the war, one was a prisoner and two were serving. Of her chateaux, one in Alsace had been destroyed in 1914, another in the Rheims area she had left a few weeks before with the certainty that it would also be in ruins. The one she occupied was her third and last. Yet, in spite of it all she kept up her head and assisted by a charming daughter entertained the officers with Badminton and Bridge.

There was a clear stream running through the grounds in which Padre Haines fished for trout, and at a discreet distance from the chateau windows, the cadre bathed. It was a delightful country life, but certainly a slack one to be living in those dramatic days. But, as one humorist remarked, "We must take the smooth with the rough and try to be thankful." All this time the weather was delightful but "trop sec" for the country folk.

On June 7th we left this haven of rest and proceeded by motor lorry through Abbeville to Canchy, where we relieved the 2/6th North Staffs Regiment, and were attached to the 108th Infantry Regiment A.E.F., Battalion H.Q. and No. 2 Company (McAra) being attached to Regimental H.Q. and the 3rd Battalion at Canchy. No. 1 Company Cadre (McLoughlin) with the 1st Battalion at Froyelles-Fontaine, No. 3 Company (Robertson) at Manchy with the 102nd Engineer Regiment (attached 108th Infantry Regiment), No. 4 Company (Wallace) was with the 2nd Battalion at Domvast.

This 108th Infantry Regiment A.E.F. was a Unit of the National Guard which had been mobilised since 1915 for duty on the Mexican Frontier. Whilst in Canchy a number of us were able to visit the battlefield of Crecy. It was easy to pick out the ridge above and just clear of the village where the English ranks took their stand with the baggage waggons and horses on the rearward side of the slope; also the site of the old windmill at one end of the position which formed Edward III.'s O.P.

We took the risk of being reported for damaging crops and rode down the slope up which the French cavalry charged after they had ridden down their Genoese bowmen, and by sheer chance we came to the memorial erected on the spot where the blind King of Bohemia lost his life and his feathers.

It was an inspiration to pay a visit to this scene of ancient valour, and we wondered how many British soldiers in uniform had ridden over the battlefield since that August day in 1346 when Edward, the Black Prince,

Did make defeat on the full power of France,  
Whilst his most mighty father on a hill  
Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp  
Forage in blood of French nobility.

At Canchy 2/Lt. B. Snowden was transferred to the base, and Lieut. F. A. Ridler, M.C. (4th Gloucesters) became Adjutant.

On June 18th the Battalion Cadre, in conjunction with the whole of the 108th American Regiment, moved by route march from Canchy across the Somme to billets in St. Blimont, and on June 21st, with the 3rd Battalion 108th Infantry Regiment, moved by route march back across the river to Buigny St. Maclou.

Next day we were taken by motor 'bus to billets in Beaudricourt, a village a few miles to the east of Doullens. At last we were within easy reach of the front again. The lesson of March had been taken to heart by the British, and the whole of the area from Arras to Doullens was in thorough readiness for any attempt at another break through on the part of the Boche. Every bridge and culvert, every cross road, was mined and marked: "Prepared for demolition."

As far as one could see, beautifully sited and well constructed trenches were ready for occupation. In case of an attack we had to man these defence lines with the American units to which we were attached.

It was one of our duties to take American officers of high rank round these newly constructed defences, and on one occasion the route lay along a road across which a platoon of Scots Guards were indulging in short range musketry practice. The small party were halted by a sentry. Permission to pass was asked for and curtly refused by the very junior Guards' officer in command.

The platoon sergeant, a man of 11per years and more stable judgment, edged his way up to the writer and said in a stage whisper, "Foreign officer, sir?" On being informed that he was holding up an American General he had a few hurried words with his Platoon Commander, who now dropped his haughty Guard's manner and became

the perfect gentleman. With profuse apologies for the delay, etc., etc., he accompanied us on part of our journey almost imploring the British officer not to mention it to his Company Commander, or he did not know what would happen.

To revert to the Defence Lines, the trenches were complete; wells had been sunk to give a water supply; telephone lines laid from Company to Battalion Headquarters, and machine gun positions complete with a cleared field of fire and elaborate range card. Shell holes here and there in the waving cornfields showed that the enemy was fully aware of the new lines of defence and also had the range.

The Americans manned these trenches once by day and once by night. The time allowed from leaving the billets being  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours in the day and three hours by night.

Coming events cast their shadows before, and on June 26th Capt. T. McAra, Lieut. D. V. McLachlan, and Lieut. J. G. Robertson were cross posted to the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers, and Capt. L. B. L. Seckham, M.C., 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and Capt. G. C. Turner, M.C., were cross posted from the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers to us.

The Battalion Instructional Cadre was readjusted on June 28th as follows:

Battalion H.Q. attached to 108th Infantry Regiment H.Q.

No. 1 Company attached to 1st Battalion 108th Regiment.

No. 2 Company attached to 2nd Battalion 108th Regiment.

No. 3 Company attached to 3rd Battalion 108th Regiment.

No. 4 Company attached to H.Q. Company 108th Regiment.

No. 1 and 4 Companies moved to Sus-St. Leger, No. 3 Company to Ivergny, H.Q. and No. 2 Company remaining at Beaudricourt.

The 108th Infantry Regiment A.E.F. left Beaudricourt on July 2nd for Bouquemaison, where they entrained

The Battalion Cadre reassembled and joined the 320th Infantry and the 1st Battalion of the Regiment des St. Leger.

Our usual training was carried on with these new units until July 21st when the American Army arrived some fifteen miles to billets in Candas, and the following day proceeded by train via Amiens to the Dieppe-Paris line.

It was rather an experience to pass through Amiens at this time. Sitting at ease in the carriage you could see the enemy kite balloons in the distance. The twisted debris of all kinds of rolling stock—the deserted platforms littered with tangled girders, twisted rails and broken bricks—showed that a daylight passage of this zone was highly dangerous. Our train stopped at standstill about half a mile away from the station and remained there for nearly an hour. We felt safer when the journey recommenced.

At Haudricourt we saw officers and men of a Battalion of the Division who were the advance party to units which were to unite at Haudricourt. We were six miles away from our camp but the junior commanding officer would not budge. His orders were that we had to detrain at Serqueux some eighteen miles down the line, and to Serqueux we went.

On arrival we found that we had to march back to Serqueux. We left Serqueux about 8.30 p.m., and marched all through a hot rainy night we reached Haudricourt, "fed up" with everything about the following morning.

Battalion Cadres of the Division were here assembled and the camp came under the orders of Brigadier Williams, 199th Brigade.

We remained from July 22nd to August 13th. Other camps round Haudricourt were numerous and recently arrived from Salonica and Palestine. National and Brigade establishments had been sent these units from the east to form a reorganised Division. The fate of the Battalion Cadres remained sealed, and in the meantime the time passed away enough. A few hours' parade in the morning was followed by the rest of the day to follow our own bent

which frequent visits to the quaint country town of Aumale some five miles distant.

Minden Day, 1918, was a red letter day for us and we really made the most of it. Roses were a difficulty but the supply of real ones was made up, as on a previous occasion, with artificial ones.

In view of the uncertainty of our future it had been decided to spend whatever canteen funds we had in hand, and for that laudable purpose a dinner had been ordered for the whole of the Cadre at the Hotel de Dauphin at Aumale. The officers rode over in cavalcade, whilst every other member of the Cadre was transported in motor lorries specially chartered for the occasion.

Our entry into Aumale caused quite a sensation and the civilian population were much intrigued with the roses in our caps.

The dinner was a magnificent success. We had the spacious dining room of the hotel to ourselves, and for most a long time had elapsed since they had sat down at a decent table with cloth, china, cutlery, glasses, and the incidentals of civilisation. The meal was excellent and glasses were freely filled and as freely emptied. A "sing song" followed, and the festival kept up until after midnight.

What if horses were found somewhat difficult to mount even with the assistance of a friendly groom, and if laughter and song broke the silence of the streets. It is dark at night in narrow streets, and cobbles are uneven. Whilst a merry heart goes *all* the day; and it is no offence to sing and give thanks with the best member that one has.

One tragedy rather marred the proceedings. A certain N.C.O., who perhaps had "done himself" rather better earlier in the day than the majority, fell asleep on the floor of the lorry during the journey to Aumale. This fact was unnoticed owing to the excitement of arrival, and he slumbered on until the crowd boarded the lorries again for the return journey. Anyway, we got safely back to camp, although it is rumoured that Brigadier and Staff Captain, burning the midnight oil, did hear sounds as of horses galloping.

Shortly after this event the fate of the Cadres was decided; they were to be disbanded and the personnel sent to the base.

List of officers of 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers after amalgamation with 12th (Service) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers. 13. 8. 1918:

Lieut.-Col. R. F. Gross, D.S.O.  
 Major J. S. Townsend, M.C.  
 Capt. F. Franks, M.C. (Adjutant).  
 Capt. F. A. Ridler, M.C. (surplus to establishment).  
 Capt. A. O. Bisson, R.A.M.C.  
 2/Lt. C. W. Jones (L.G. officer).  
 2/Lt. C. Jackson (Signals).  
 2/Lt. C. W. Cave (Transport).  
 Lieut. and Q.M. G. H. O'Brien.  
 2/Lt. R. F. Hinson (Assistant Adjutant).

"A" Company.

Capt. R. A. V. White	Lieut G. H. Rimmell
2/Lt. T. C. Moore	Lieut. J. W. Deane
2/Lt. S. D. Stephen	2/Lt. W. Vallans
	2/Lt. J. W. Campbell.

"B" Company.

Capt. W. Vestey-Jones	Capt. I. S. Rutherford
2/Lt. A. Inglis	2/Lt. J. R. Smith Saville
2/Lt. R. A. T. Cave-	
	Mathieson 2/Lt. T. C. Marriott
Lt. C. G. E. Heider (Gas)	Lieut. P. Tarrant (L.T.M.B.)
2/Lt. F. Baker	Lieut. Tyson

"C" Company.

Capt. L. B. L. Seckham,	2/Lt. A. F. Stoker
M.C.	2/Lt. L. G. Gibson
2/Lt. C. A. Batham,	Lieut. A. B. G. Manson
D.C.M.	2/Lt. Abberley

"D" Company.

Capt. C. H. Potter, M.C.	Capt. D. Pennington, M.C.
2/Lt. H. H. Smith	2/Lt. C. Cheney
2/Lt. H. E. Atkins	Lieut. F. A. Shipp

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE FINAL ADVANCE.

Lineal survivors of 1st Line Territorial Units being part of the British Army under the Army Act could not be disbanded except by Act of Parliament, and so the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, the 4th East Lancashires and the 9th Manchesters continued to exist.

The 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers absorbed the 12th (Service) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and a similar procedure was followed with the 9th Manchesters. The East Lancashires found no Units of the East Lancashire Regiment to absorb and left the Division.

The 12th Lancashire Fusiliers was a Battalion from Salonica and a Unit of the reconstituted 66th Division.

The word "absorb" used above is a somewhat inadequate description of what actually took place. Of the officers of the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers Lieut.- Col. E. P. Nares was appointed to command the 9th Gloucesters. Capt. A. S. C. Fothergill and Capt. J. Wallace were transferred to the East Lancashires, Capt. G. C. Turner and Lieut T. Somerville had been admitted to hospital. Capts. L. B. L. Seckham, C. H. Potter, and F. A. Ridler, with the other ranks, were transferred to the new Battalion, so also was Lieut. H. W. Walton, who had recently joined the Cadre.

On August 13th the 12th (Service) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers adopted its new designation of the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers. The transfer of the officers and other ranks from the Cadre was an affair that needed diplomatic handling. Lieut.-Col. R. F. Gross, D.S.O., treated the newcomers, whom he distributed throughout the Battalion, with the greatest consideration. The result was that the new Unit quickly claimed alike their interest and allegiance. Captain Seckham was given command of "C" Company. Capt. Ridler, for a period, remained surplus to establishment, and Lieut. Walton transferred to the Brigade Light Trench Mortar Battery;

Capt. Potter was given command of "D" Company, and with him went C.S.M. Smith and C.Q.M.S. Tancred, also Kershaw as batman and Flux as groom, whose duty it was to look after "Snowball," Col. Prince's old mount, now "the doyen" of the Transport Lines. She was the only horse of all those that went out with the Battalion from Colchester that returned to England with it some two years later. It is hoped that fate was kind to her to the end.

Writing of horses brings back memories of Crowborough and Major Bealey, of "Bobby" and the faithful Sunderland. "Sunderland, has Bobby had his oats?" "Yes, sir! Yes, sir! 5 Bl—y bags full." "Have the other horses had some?" "No, sir!" "Well! Well! damn it! there's a war on." Curiously enough the 2nd in command of "D" Company was Capt. Pennington, who had been attached to the 2/8th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers whilst we were at Colchester. We also found attached to the Battalion as the Brigade Interpreter the Marquis D'Albon, who stood old friends a dinner at the "Dauphin" to celebrate the fact that he had just put up his two silver bars, which meant that he had completed four years as an Interpreter.

We stayed in Haudricourt until September 20th. The camp was in an ideal situation on the slopes of a hill some half mile away from the place where the Cadres had been situated. It was a pleasant time of the year to be under canvas, a little chilly at night and in early morning, but perfect during the day. We went off in turn by batches for 14 days of English leave whilst for those who remained military routine caused the days to slip quickly by. There were the usual Battalion, Company, Platoon, and Bathing Parades—with an unusual one in addition—the Quinine Parade, at which the M.O. daily issued decreasing doses to all who had been to Salonica. Then we had occasional Route Marches along the quiet roads which twisted in the same manner as a rolling English road across a country which looked so English in its admixture of pasture, orchard and woodland, that it was left to the villages alone to cry out Normandy.

Pay days came and went, Battalion and Company training, Tactical Schemes, Kit Inspections, and an occasional Lecture all claimed a space in the scheme of things, whilst the petty delinquencies inseparable from military

life received their daily meed of condemnation in the judicial atmosphere of Company or C.O.'s Orders according to the degree of terpitude involved. Battalion and Brigade Sports were held. The Divisional Concert Party with our two old friends Bass and Bodini topping the bill, gave an occasional show in the Y.M.C.A. Canteen, and so the time went on.

On September 19th the Camp was transformed into a hive of bustling activity as orders had been received which stated that there would be a forward move on the morrow, that the Battalion would join the 198th Brigade, and that the 66th Division on arrival in the new found area would join the XIII. Corps and become part of the IV. Army.

September 20th. We were up betimes and left Camp at 8 o'clock for Fromerie Station, some 10 miles away, which we reached before midday. It was pleasant September weather, and except for one shower, ideal for marching.

Headquarters, "A" and "C" Companies left in the first train, which started off about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, to be followed shortly after by a second train which conveyed the remaining two Companies. The second half of the Battalion, after a slow, cold journey, reached the detraining point at 3 o'clock next morning. On arrival it took about an hour to unload Company Cookers and Stores, and by the time we started on the final stage of our journey it had clouded over and began to rain in very heavy showers, so that we had a muddy two hours tramp and were pretty well wet through on arrival at the village of Manin at 6 a.m.

No place looks very cheerful on a bleak dawn when you are cold, wet, tired, and hungry, and have spent a sleepless night to boot. However, we got something to eat, and after a wash and a shave things seemed more desirable.

On September 22nd we marched to billets in the neighbouring village of Lignereuil. Here we remained for a few days carrying on with Company training, reorganising platoons and sections, completing equipment and cutting down stores, all in view of future moves and operations, with a couple of Brigade route marches thrown in by way of variety.

marched through the streets. We halted on the quay side in front of what appeared to be a coal factor's office. Here in the wall was a tablet advising all and sundry that from this spot William of Normandy set sail for the conquest of England. It is not surprising that the town which had seen such scenes and also been so intimately connected with Edward III., the Black Prince, and Crecy, turned but a sleepy eye upon a Territorial Cadre off to train Americans.

It was dark before we cleared the town, and as we marched mile after mile along the dusty road the stars came out and the mysterious throaty rattle caused by the croaking of innumerable frogs accompanied us for miles. Feeling very tired, we arrived at Lancheres at 11 p.m., and with a minimum of delay found our allotted billets, consumed a meal, and lay down to sleep the "sleep of the just."

The authors can hear the authentic son of Mars snorting and ejaculating "Damme, but I thought this was a War History, and here's a fellow drivelling on about May mornings and forests and twilight and frogs."

They reply with the soft answer that during the two and a half years it has taken to collect the material for this book it has been necessary to resort to all kinds of subterfuge to obtain copy and if this contributor had been pulled up "too sharply" he might not have contributed more. But we did give him a gentle hint not to offend again.

We remained at Lancheres from May 3rd to May 9th, and whilst a certain amount of training went on we were for the most part marking time until the arrival of the American troops. On May 9th we marched to fresh billets in the village of Bourseville, and Lieut. D. V. McLachlan joined the Battalion. The American troops had not arrived but we had attached to us an American supply officer—a single swallow (happy word)—to herald the approach of summer, and we were all agog with expectation.

For "The Yanks are Coming."

Later, when American troops did arrive with magnificent military bands this song "Over there" became the Dough boys' "Tipperary." Our men sang it, too, on the march,

and to the great amusement of the American troops, they sang :

For the Yanks are coming,  
A *long time* coming.  
So it seems to those "over here."

But everything comes to him who waits.

## CHAPTER X.

## WITH THE AMERICANS.

The period of some three months from the beginning of May to the end of July, during which we were associated with units of the American Expeditionary Force, afforded us a very pleasant interlude in the serious work of campaigning. Our duties during these weeks of training were of an advisory and instructional nature. Each officer and man of the British Division held a similar position in the American Division and was always on hand when his American opposite number asked for advice.

The whole of the 66th Division was formed into these training Cadres, with the exception of the Divisional Artillery, which remained in action in the Bethune and Armentieres sectors. Later in the year it joined the reformed 66th Division at Le Cateau.

Each American Division remained with us for about three weeks, after which time it passed on into the line, and a new Division took its place.

An important part of the general training was directed towards the improvement in mobility of American units which arrived overburdened with all sorts of wonderful impedimenta. American officers told the writers that on numerous occasions it had been pointed out to the authorities in the States that there was no need for the large supply of linen, boots, and clothing which each American officer had to bring overseas.

Anyway, stratagem had to be resorted to in order to break down the baggage problem (which was as galling to the ordinary American regimental officer as to the British advisor).

It was found that American transport was in the habit of making double journeys to bring up the excess baggage, so a few route marches were undertaken which made the horses fairly tired. Then to the consternation of every one not in the know, early one morning we marched away to an unknown destination. The distance covered

amounted to about twenty-three miles. After a day's rest we got on the move again. This thoroughly separated the officer and his surplus kit for good and all. Very soon afterwards the American Higher Command had the kit collected from where it had been dumped and placed in store in Calais.

We still have very pleasant recollections of the Americans themselves, both as soldiers and as boon companions. Their physique was excellent and their keenness beyond doubt. After they had got to know us their friendliness was genuine and was coupled with a certain diffidence and lack of bombast which was unexpected.

There was, of course, on both sides, in ways and modes of speech a certain touch of strangeness which was only natural seeing that the ranks of an American unit contained the offspring of every European nation, some of whom were unable to speak English.

On one occasion the writer received a message from an American scout he had sent out. It was written in German!

The canvas gaiter, most probably a useful adjunct in arid Texas, was certainly not the right article for muddy Flanders. The rolled packs and portable tents were also not designed for the Western Front.

At times it was necessary to keep a strict eye on the jocular Lancastrians who saw nothing but humour in the equipment of our American Allies.

The dentist, with his dental chair and workshop, was humorous; the priceless one pounder batteries drawn by raw boned mules, and the team of gaunt faced solemn towering giants walking on either side of the toy cannon were received with applause, and caused one man from the neighbourhood of Littleborough to remark: "If 'a had me clogs on aw could punce hell out o' one of them." Yet the Yanks declared it might be very useful against a "Pill Box."

Their ideas of "March discipline" were not ours, and the gravity and ceremony of their salute had certainly a touch of seventeenth century politeness which made it a real salute. Again, the universal use of the word "hike"; their "1st privates"; their "transportation," and other terms of speech sounded very quaint. Their cumbrous phrase, "Those G— d—d sons of bitches" used when they referred to the enemy was quickly converted to the

British Tommy's B—y Boche; their pay days with the accompanying dice throwing; their base ball matches—all these and similar instances and inconsequences come back as one recalls those pleasant days.

You can, "in the mind's ear, Horatio," still hear them singing as they march along the country roads :

All we have to do is sign the Pay Roll,  
 All we have to do is sign the Pay Roll,  
 All we have to do is sign the Pay Roll,  
 And we don't draw a G— D— cent.

It sounds silly and feeble, so does the British song which was sung to the same tune :

"They were only playing leap-frog,"

yet in the ranks of their respective armies, these songs, like "old soldiers," will never die, and the chorus of the marching song of the American Civil War will appear again whenever British or American troops take the field.

On the 12th, Lieut.-Col. G. P. Pollitt, D.S.O., proceeded to the 25th Division to take command of the 11th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, Capt. Potter, M.C., resuming command of the Battalion.

Early on the 16th Capt. Potter proceeded to Eu to meet the 2nd Battalion 325th Infantry Regiment of the American Expeditionary Force.

The march from Eu to Bourseville proved to be a very trying one for the Americans. They were a Southern Division from "Alabama, Tennessee, and Caroline," and had been many weeks on the journey too tightly packed for exercise.

Their long packs and tightly fitting tunics did not help them on this sweltering hot day. The British Company Commanders met the Commanders of the American Companies they had been allotted to, and as quickly as possible a good meal was served which was greatly appreciated by the Americans.

Before the arrival of our American Allies, all ranks of the Division had been duly advised that they must take every opportunity of cementing the friendship of the nations and that on no account give cause for the slightest offence.

We considered that a good start could be made by entertaining the whole of the American officers to lunch. It was a dry day and they came from a dry country. As anyone knows who made the campaigns in France it is unsafe to drink the water of the country unless chlorinated. You can't cement the friendship of nations in chlorinated water, so it was decided to give them a real Allied welcome. Wines of France, Vermuth of Italy, Whisky of Scotland, Beer of England, together with a special consignment of food specially purchased in Abbeville. One stalwart specimen helped himself to a tumblerful of Vermuth and gulped it down. His eye caught that of a British officer who suggested another. This followed the first with the remark, "Sure, but that's real good."

That lunch delivered the Americans into our hands, and we became the firmest friends. Scales were removed from the eyes of both Americans and British. We found that these Americans had none of the cocksureness and egotism which the modern novel portrays: officers and men were simple and unaffected and the very opposite to boastful.

As the weeks went on the Americans said that they had misjudged us when at home. They wanted to know why they had not been informed our Army was such a good one, our equipment so perfect, and that our county regiments contained as good fighting material as was to be found in the Canadian and Australian Forces.

Their verdict was that we had been too modest. The Americans were given two days' rest with sea bathing before commencing serious training.

On the 20th May Lieut.-Col. E. P. Nares, M.C. (the Cheshire Regiment) took command of the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, and training in earnest followed. The newcomers were green but keen, they worked hard and made rapid and real progress. There is no doubt that they were keen to get to know all we could teach them and then try their knowledge on the enemy. Short instructional courses for the American N.C.O.'s in Lewis Gun, Bombing, Scouting, Physical Training, Bayonet Fighting, Musketry, Gas, and even Cooking were commenced. The American Company Commander found that when he had detailed all the necessary N.C.O.'s and men to the various courses, he had very little company left, and, like his

British brother, under similar circumstances, consigned the specialist to perdition.

On May 22nd the Battalion Cadre marched to Woignarue, previously occupied by the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers, and were attached to the 3rd Battalion 325th Infantry Regiment A.E.F. This Battalion was commanded by Major Pierce, a New York solicitor.

Two of our officers were strolling down the village street one day when they met the American Town Major. Remembering carefully the instructions of making a good impression on all and sundry of our American friends they promptly invited him to the mess for a drink. He gratefully assented. American messes were dry, but the majority of the Americans we met were only abstainers through force of circumstances.

On arrival at the mess three good "pegs" were poured out and a suspicion of soda water added to each. The American drank with relish, and setting down his glass exclaimed, "Gee, but this sure is fine stuff," to which one of his hosts replied, at the same time showing him the bottle, "Yes, it's Haig and Haig. Sir Douglas Haig's firm, you know." This brought the surprising rejoinder from the American, "My, you don't say! Reckon I always allowed he was some soldier, but I did not know he ran a sal-oon."

The Financial Department of the American Army was very slow in commencing operations, and all ranks found themselves in straitened circumstances. Every expedient known was tried in order to raise money. Small French children began to appear with boots many sizes too big for them. British Tommies shaved with gold-plated Gillette razors. Silk socks were common, and several shirts appeared as blouses. Soon these things became a drug on the market and by a curious coincidence, at the same time an order was issued which stated that "Several cases of British soldiers buying articles of American kit have been reported. This is contrary to all regulations and must cease forthwith."

June 1st saw us on the road again, and in conjunction with the American Battalion we marched to Montieres. The Americans went under canvas, and we occupied the chateau—a delightful old place with fine grounds.

The Officers' Mess was in a room that was part Conservatory and part Smoke Room. Madame, the owner,

was a fine type of the French aristocrat. Two of her sons had been killed in the war, one was a prisoner and two were serving. Of her chateaux, one in Alsace had been destroyed in 1914, another in the Rheims area she had left a few weeks before with the certainty that it would also be in ruins. The one she occupied was her third and last. Yet, in spite of it all she kept up her head and assisted by a charming daughter entertained the officers with Badminton and Bridge.

There was a clear stream running through the grounds in which Padre Haines fished for trout, and at a discreet distance from the chateau windows, the cadre bathed. It was a delightful country life, but certainly a slack one to be living in those dramatic days. But, as one humorist remarked, "We must take the smooth with the rough and try to be thankful." All this time the weather was delightful but "trop sec" for the country folk.

On June 7th we left this haven of rest and proceeded by motor lorry through Abbeville to Canchy, where we relieved the 2/6th North Staffs Regiment, and were attached to the 108th Infantry Regiment A.E.F., Battalion H.Q. and No. 2 Company (McAra) being attached to Regimental H.Q. and the 3rd Battalion at Canchy. No. 1 Company Cadre (McLoughlin) with the 1st Battalion at Froyelles-Fontaine, No. 3 Company (Robertson) at Manchy with the 102nd Engineer Regiment (attached 108th Infantry Regiment), No. 4 Company (Wallace) was with the 2nd Battalion at Domvast.

This 108th Infantry Regiment A.E.F. was a Unit of the National Guard which had been mobilised since 1915 for duty on the Mexican Frontier. Whilst in Canchy a number of us were able to visit the battlefield of Crecy. It was easy to pick out the ridge above and just clear of the village where the English ranks took their stand with the baggage waggons and horses on the rearward side of the slope; also the site of the old windmill at one end of the position which formed Edward III.'s O.P.

We took the risk of being reported for damaging crops and rode down the slope up which the French cavalry charged after they had ridden down their Genoese bowmen, and by sheer chance we came to the memorial erected on the spot where the blind King of Bohemia lost his life and his feathers.

It was an inspiration to pay a visit to this scene of ancient valour, and we wondered how many British soldiers in uniform had ridden over the battlefield since that August day in 1346 when Edward, the Black Prince,

Did make defeat on the full power of France,  
Whilst his most mighty father on a hill  
Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp  
Forage in blood of French nobility.

At Canchy 2/Lt. B. Snowden was transferred to the base, and Lieut. F. A. Ridler, M.C. (4th Gloucesters) became Adjutant.

On June 18th the Battalion Cadre, in conjunction with the whole of the 108th American Regiment, moved by route march from Canchy across the Somme to billets in St. Blimont, and on June 21st, with the 3rd Battalion 108th Infantry Regiment, moved by route march back across the river to Buigny St. Maclou.

Next day we were taken by motor 'bus to billets in Beaudricourt, a village a few miles to the east of Doullens. At last we were within easy reach of the front again. The lesson of March had been taken to heart by the British, and the whole of the area from Arras to Doullens was in thorough readiness for any attempt at another break through on the part of the Boche. Every bridge and culvert, every cross road, was mined and marked: "Prepared for demolition."

As far as one could see, beautifully sited and well constructed trenches were ready for occupation. In case of an attack we had to man these defence lines with the American units to which we were attached.

It was one of our duties to take American officers of high rank round these newly constructed defences, and on one occasion the route lay along a road across which a platoon of Scots Guards were indulging in short range musketry practice. The small party were halted by a sentry. Permission to pass was asked for and curtly refused by the very junior Guards' officer in command.

The platoon sergeant, a man of 11per years and more stable judgment, edged his way up to the writer and said in a stage whisper, "Foreign officer, sir?" On being informed that he was holding up an American General he had a few hurried words with his Platoon Commander, who now dropped his haughty Guard's manner and became

the perfect gentleman. With profuse apologies for the delay, etc., etc., he accompanied us on part of our journey almost imploring the British officer not to mention it to his Company Commander, or he did not know what would happen.

To revert to the Defence Lines, the trenches were complete; wells had been sunk to give a water supply; telephone lines laid from Company to Battalion Headquarters, and machine gun positions complete with a cleared field of fire and elaborate range card. Shell holes here and there in the waving cornfields showed that the enemy was fully aware of the new lines of defence and also had the range.

The Americans manned these trenches once by day and once by night. The time allowed from leaving the billets being  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours in the day and three hours by night.

Coming events cast their shadows before, and on June 26th Capt. T. McAra, Lieut. D. V. McLachlan, and Lieut. J. G. Robertson were cross posted to the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers, and Capt. L. B. L. Seckham, M.C., 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and Capt. G. C. Turner, M.C., were cross posted from the 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers to us.

The Battalion Instructional Cadre was readjusted on June 28th as follows:

Battalion H.Q. attached to 108th Infantry Regiment H.Q.

No. 1 Company attached to 1st Battalion 108th Regiment.

No. 2 Company attached to 2nd Battalion 108th Regiment.

No. 3 Company attached to 3rd Battalion 108th Regiment.

No. 4 Company attached to H.Q. Company 108th Regiment.

No. 1 and 4 Companies moved to Sus-St. Leger, No. 3 Company to Ivergny, H.Q. and No. 2 Company remaining at Beaudricourt.

The 108th Infantry Regiment A.E.F. left Beaudricourt on July 2nd for Bouquemaison, where they entrained

for the front. The Battalion Cadre reassembled and billeted in Sus-St. Leger. On July 6th the 320th Infantry Regiment H.Q. and the 1st Battalion of the Regiment marched into Sus-St. Leger.

The usual training was carried on with these new units of the American Army until July 21st when the Cadre marched some fifteen miles to billets in Candas, and on the following day proceeded by train via Amiens to Serqueux on the Dieppe-Paris line.

It was rather an experience to pass through Amiens by rail at this time. Sitting at ease in the carriage you could see the enemy kite balloons in the distance. The burnt and twisted debris of all kinds of rolling stock—the absolutely deserted platforms littered with tangled girders, shattered glass and broken bricks—showed that a daylight passage of this zone was highly dangerous. Our train came to a standstill about half a mile away from the station and remained there for nearly an hour. We felt greatly relieved when the journey recommenced.

At Abancourt we saw officers and men of a Battalion of the 66th Division who were the advance party to units of the Division which were to unite at Haudricourt. We were only six miles away from our camp but the junior train conducting officer would not budge. His orders were that we had to detrain at Serqueux some eighteen miles further down the line, and to Serqueux we went.

On arrival we found that we had to march back to Haudricourt. We left Serqueux about 8.30 p.m., and after a trying march all through a hot rainy night we arrived at Haudricourt, "fed up" with everything about 5 a.m. the following morning.

The Cadres of the Division were here assembled and the whole of the camp came under the orders of Brigadier-General Williams, 199th Brigade.

Here we remained from July 22nd to August 13th. Collected in other camps round Haudricourt were numerous Battalions recently arrived from Salonica and Palestine. Our Divisional and Brigade establishments had been grafted on these units from the east to form a reorganised 66th Division. The fate of the Battalion Cadres remained to be decided, and in the meantime the time passed pleasantly enough. A few hours' parade in the morning and freedom for the rest of the day to follow our own bent

which frequent visits to the quaint country town of Aumale some five miles distant.

Minden Day, 1918, was a red letter day for us and we really made the most of it. Roses were a difficulty but the supply of real ones was made up, as on a previous occasion, with artificial ones.

In view of the uncertainty of our future it had been decided to spend whatever canteen funds we had in hand, and for that laudable purpose a dinner had been ordered for the whole of the Cadre at the Hotel de Dauphin at Aumale. The officers rode over in cavalcade, whilst every other member of the Cadre was transported in motor lorries specially chartered for the occasion.

Our entry into Aumale caused quite a sensation and the civilian population were much intrigued with the roses in our caps.

The dinner was a magnificent success. We had the spacious dining room of the hotel to ourselves, and for most a long time had elapsed since they had sat down at a decent table with cloth, china, cutlery, glasses, and the incidentals of civilisation. The meal was excellent and glasses were freely filled and as freely emptied. A "sing song" followed, and the festival kept up until after midnight.

What if horses were found somewhat difficult to mount even with the assistance of a friendly groom, and if laughter and song broke the silence of the streets. It is dark at night in narrow streets, and cobbles are uneven. Whilst a merry heart goes *all* the day; and it is no offence to sing and give thanks with the best member that one has.

One tragedy rather marred the proceedings. A certain N.C.O., who perhaps had "done himself" rather better earlier in the day than the majority, fell asleep on the floor of the lorry during the journey to Aumale. This fact was unnoticed owing to the excitement of arrival, and he slumbered on until the crowd boarded the lorries again for the return journey. Anyway, we got safely back to camp, although it is rumoured that Brigadier and Staff Captain, burning the midnight oil, did hear sounds as of horses galloping.

Shortly after this event the fate of the Cadres was decided; they were to be disbanded and the personnel sent to the base.

List of officers of 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers  
after amalgamation with 12th (Service) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers. 13. 8. 1915.

Lieut.-Col. R. F. Gross, D.S.O.  
 Major J. S. Townsend, M.C.  
 Capt. F. Franks, M.C. ('Adjutant').  
 Capt. F. A. Ridder, M.C. ('surplus to establishment').  
 Capt. A. O. Bisson, R.A.M.C.  
 2/Lt. C. W. Jones ('L.G. officer').  
 2 Lt. C. Jackson ('Signals').  
 2 Lt. C. W. Cave ('Transport').  
 Lieut. and Q.M. G. H. O'Brien.  
 2 Lt. R. F. Hinson ('Assistant Adjutant').

"A" Company.

Capt. R. A. V. White	Lieut G. H. Rimmell
2 Lt. T. C. Moore	Lieut. J. W. Deane
2/Lt. S. D. Stephen	2/Lt. W. Vallans
	2/Lt. J. W. Campbell.

"B" Company.

Capt. W. Vestey-Jones	Capt. I. S. Rutherford
2/Lt. A. Inglis	2/Lt. J. R. Smith Saville
2/Lt. R. A. T. Cave-	
Mathieson	2/Lt. T. C. Marriott
Lt. C. G. E. Heider (Gas)	Lieut. P. Tarrant (L.T.M.B.)
2/Lt. F. Baker	Lieut. Tyson

"C" Company.

Capt. L. B. L. Seckham,	2/Lt. A. F. Stoker
M.C.	2/Lt. L. G. Gibson
2/Lt. C. A. Batham,	Lieut. A. B. G. Manson
D.C.M	2/Lt. Abberley

"D" Company.

Capt. C. H. Potter, M.C.	Capt. D. Pennington, M.C.
2/Lt. H. H. Smith	2/Lt. C. Cheney
2/Lt. H. E. Atkins	Lieut. F. A. Shipp

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE FINAL ADVANCE.

Lineal survivors of 1st Line Territorial Units being part of the British Army under the Army Act could not be disbanded except by Act of Parliament, and so the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers, the 4th East Lancashires and the 9th Manchesters continued to exist.

The 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers absorbed the 12th (Service) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, and a similar procedure was followed with the 9th Manchesters. The East Lancashires found no Units of the East Lancashire Regiment to absorb and left the Division.

The 12th Lancashire Fusiliers was a Battalion from Salonica and a Unit of the reconstituted 66th Division.

The word "absorb" used above is a somewhat inadequate description of what actually took place. Of the officers of the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers Lieut.- Col. E. P. Nares was appointed to command the 9th Gloucesters. Capt. A. S. C. Fothergill and Capt. J. Wallace were transferred to the East Lancashires, Capt. G. C. Turner and Lieut T. Somerville had been admitted to hospital. Capts. L. B. L. Seckham, C. H. Potter, and F. A. Ridler, with the other ranks, were transferred to the new Battalion, so also was Lieut. H. W. Walton, who had recently joined the Cadre.

On August 13th the 12th (Service) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers adopted its new designation of the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers. The transfer of the officers and other ranks from the Cadre was an affair that needed diplomatic handling. Lieut.-Col. R. F. Gross, D.S.O., treated the newcomers, whom he distributed throughout the Battalion, with the greatest consideration. The result was that the new Unit quickly claimed alike their interest and allegiance. Captain Seckham was given command of "C" Company. Capt. Ridler, for a period, remained surplus to establishment, and Lieut. Walton transferred to the Brigade Light Trench Mortar Battery;

Capt. Potter was given command of "D" Company, and with him went C.S.M. Smith and C.Q.M.S. Tancred, also Kershaw as batman and Flux as groom, whose duty it was to look after "Snowball," Col. Prince's old mount, now "the doyen" of the Transport Lines. She was the only horse of all those that went out with the Battalion from Colchester that returned to England with it some two years later. It is hoped that fate was kind to her to the end.

Writing of horses brings back memories of Crowborough and Major Bealey, of "Bobby" and the faithful Sunderland. "Sunderland, has Bobby had his oats?" "Yes, sir! Yes, sir! 5 Bl—y bags full." "Have the other horses had some?" "No, sir!" "Well! Well! damn it! there's a war on." Curiously enough the 2nd in command of "D" Company was Capt. Pennington, who had been attached to the 2/8th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers whilst we were at Colchester. We also found attached to the Battalion as the Brigade Interpreter the Marquis D'Albon, who stood old friends a dinner at the "Dauphin" to celebrate the fact that he had just put up his two silver bars, which meant that he had completed four years as an Interpreter.

We stayed in Haudricourt until September 20th. The camp was in an ideal situation on the slopes of a hill some half mile away from the place where the Cadres had been situated. It was a pleasant time of the year to be under canvas, a little chilly at night and in early morning, but perfect during the day. We went off in turn by batches for 14 days of English leave whilst for those who remained military routine caused the days to slip quickly by. There were the usual Battalion, Company, Platoon, and Bathing Parades—with an unusual one in addition—the Quinine Parade, at which the M.O. daily issued decreasing doses to all who had been to Salonica. Then we had occasional Route Marches along the quiet roads which twisted in the same manner as a rolling English road across a country which looked so English in its admixture of pasture, orchard and woodland, that it was left to the villages alone to cry out Normandy.

Pay days came and went, Battalion and Company training, Tactical Schemes, Kit Inspections, and an occasional Lecture all claimed a space in the scheme of things, whilst the petty delinquencies enseparable from military

life received their daily meed of condemnation in the judicial atmosphere of Company or C.O.'s Orders according to the degree of terpitude involved. Battalion and Brigade Sports were held. The Divisional Concert Party with our two old friends Bass and Bodini topping the bill, gave an occasional show in the Y.M.C.A. Canteen, and so the time went on.

On September 19th the Camp was transformed into a hive of bustling activity as orders had been received which stated that there would be a forward move on the morrow, that the Battalion would join the 198th Brigade, and that the 66th Division on arrival in the new found area would join the XIII. Corps and become part of the IV. Army.

September 20th. We were up betimes and left Camp at 8 o'clock for Fromerie Station, some 10 miles away, which we reached before midday. It was pleasant September weather, and except for one shower, ideal for marching.

Headquarters, "A" and "C" Companies left in the first train, which started off about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, to be followed shortly after by a second train which conveyed the remaining two Companies. The second half of the Battalion, after a slow, cold journey, reached the detraining point at 3 o'clock next morning. On arrival it took about an hour to unload Company Cookers and Stores, and by the time we started on the final stage of our journey it had clouded over and began to rain in very heavy showers, so that we had a muddy two hours tramp and were pretty well wet through on arrival at the village of Manin at 6 a.m.

No place looks very cheerful on a bleak dawn when you are cold, wet, tired, and hungry, and have spent a sleepless night to boot. However, we got something to eat, and after a wash and a shave things seemed more desirable.

On September 22nd we marched to billets in the neighbouring village of Lignereuil. Here we remained for a few days carrying on with Company training, reorganising platoons and sections, completing equipment and cutting down stores, all in view of future moves and operations, with a couple of Brigade route marches thrown in by way of variety.

On September 28th the Battalion moved by rail to Corbie, where we arrived in the early hours of the morning, found accommodation in a street of half-ruined houses in the poorest part of the town, and turned in for some well earned rest. Some of us were now on familiar ground, but how changed it was from that Corbie, so full of life and excitement, from which we started on our March adventures. Although the Boche had never set foot inside it, the town had lain for months within range of his field guns, and the whole place was deserted and in ruins. We marched out later in the day by the self-same road we took on March 26th, but on the present occasion the villages through which we passed were all in ruins, whilst the land was desolate and strewn with the flotsam left by the ebb of the great Boche wave.

Coming to Warfusée-Abancourt, we struck again the straight high road from Amiens to St. Quentin, turned aside through Bayonvillers, and found billets for the night amid the ruins of Harbonnières. We rested here a day and then marched across the Santerre plateau, dropped down to Cappy on the Somme valley, where we found quarters for the night in some old Boche dugouts, which, needless to say, were in a very filthy condition.

On October 2nd we left Cappy, and carrying out a Brigade Tactical Operation as we advanced, arrived late in the afternoon in hutments at Montauban. We were now in the area of the Somme battle of 1916, and quite close to what was once Trones Wood, which we visited.

Next day was spent in Battalion Training. This day we heard of the capitulation of Bulgaria, an announcement of peculiar interest to the majority of the Battalion since they came from the Doran Front where they had been fighting Johnnie Bulgar.

On October 4th orders were received at 7 10 p.m. for the Battalion to move at once to Moislains, a village situated in the valley of the Tortille River and on the line of the Canal du Nord, some  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the north of Peronne. We marched out of Mantauban at 7 45 p.m., and arrived at our destination shortly after midnight to find that the shelter available was in such a filthy and ruinous condition that the majority preferred to spend the remainder of the night in the open.

This stage of our journey seems a suitable one at

which to pause and take a glimpse at Contemporary History.

The Fourth Army Advance, which started on August 8th, had proceeded in successive phases.

The first was the Battle of Amiens (August 8th to 21st).

The second, the Advance to Peronne (August 22nd to 29th).

The third, the Battle of Mont St. Quentin and the advance to the Line Honlon, Maissemy, Jeancourt, Hesbecourt, and St. Emilie (August 30th to September 17th).

The fourth was the Advance to the Hindenburg Line (September 18th to 28th).

The fifth, the storming of the Hindenburg Line (September 29th to October 2nd).

The sixth, the capture of the Beaurevoir Line (October 3rd to 5th).

The seventh phase was one in which we were about to take a part (the Advance to Le Cateau).

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On October 5th the Battalion left its "B" teams in Moislans and marched out under the Command of Colonel Gross, the various companies being commanded as follows:

"A" Company	— —	Capt. White.
"B" Company	— —	Capt. Vestey-Jones.
"C" Company	— —	Capt. Seckham.
"D" Company	— —	Capt. Pennington.

That day the march was to Ste Emilie, a small village half way between Roisel and Epehy, and some mile and a half behind the village of Ronsoy. Here the Battalion spent that night and the following day.

The wheel had now almost turned full circle and the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers were near well known ground. There were few, however, left in the Battalion who had marched up from Roisel in the early morning of March 21st to take their part on that day of fighting round the village of Templeux—the bloodiest day of all those ten strenuous days of fighting which followed. However, "old soldiers never die," and here was a strong Battalion of likely lads all eager to carry on the good work and drive back the Boche to the place where he belonged.

On October 7th the Battalion moved forward at 11 o'clock through Ronsoy, across the vaunted Hindenburg Line to Bony, and on to Le Catelet and Gouy, which they reached at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, there to take up quarters on a railway siding. The town, of course, was in ruins, whilst all around were signs of recent combat, and numerous bodies, especially of American dead, gave testimony to the severity of the fighting. At 11 p.m. we started to move forward to the Taped Line in conformity with Brigade Orders. The weather was cold and windy.

By 3 o'clock on the morning of October 8th the Battalion had formed up on the Taped Line in the following order, in diamond formation: "A" Company leading, with "B" Company 50 paces on the right flank, "C" Company the same distances on the left flank, and "D" Company 50 paces in rear. Zero hour was 5 10 a.m., but as the Battalion was in Brigade Reserve it did not move off from the point of assembly until 5 45 a.m. On moving off the distance between companies was increased to 400 paces.

At 6 o'clock a message was received that the two leading Battalions, 6th Dublin Fusiliers and 5th Inniskilling Fusiliers, were pushing on satisfactorily, and at 6 42 our troops were in possession of Petit Verger Ridge, and our Battalion H.Q. moved forward to a point 500 paces east of Petit Verger Farm. The Advance was now held up as the Division on our left had not yet taken the village of Villers Outreaux, which was captured shortly before midday. The Battalion then moved forward to the Green Line, which was reached at 1 15. Later, under orders, we advanced to Le Hamage Farm and bivouacked there.

At 2 30 a.m. on October 9th orders were received to the effect that the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers would advance so as to clear the Eastern outskirts of Elincourt village and capture Pinon Wood. The Battalion moved off at 3 a.m., marched through Serain, and formed up on the N.W. side of the village at 4 50 a.m., and at Zero hour, 5 20 a.m., advanced East of Elincourt.

Unfortunately our barrage was late in coming down and inflicted numerous casualties on our forward troops. Owing to the dense mist the advance was stopped at 6 o'clock and did not recommence until 7 15 a.m., when the mist had lifted sufficiently to see the line to one's objective.

The Bois de Pinon was in our possession by 8 45 a.m., and the advance to our final objective, the line of the Maretz-Clary Road, was commenced. This was reached at 10 50 a.m. Here we remained until the early hours of next morning. We made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit, and got what rest we could during that period.

Orders were received from Brigade at 4 o'clock that the Battalion had been transferred to Divisional Reserve. This information, however, did not interfere with the current of our thoughts, which were largely centred round our experience of the last two days. We were in a very cheerful mood, our casualties so far had been comparatively slight, and we had advanced a matter of six miles against an enemy who was only in a position to fight a delaying action by means of Machine Guns and Artillery, and was being turned out of one village after another. This was truly a war of movement, and there seemed to be no reason why the process should not go on indefinitely. The Hindenburg Line was far to the back of us and the enemy had now no carefully prepared line to fall back upon. But what added to our cheerfulness above all was the fact that we had now got beyond that devastated belt of country which stretched for 40 miles east of Amiens and were in a cultivated countryside, which, although devoid of cattle, for the enemy was still driving those before them, showed little sign of war's ravages, and, moreover, we were amongst villages which although somewhat knocked about, were not complete ruins, and in which, more marvellous still, there still remained civilian inhabitants.

The weather, too, was in our favour; so far it had been fine and dry, although, of course, cold at night and in the early morning.

At 3 45 a.m. on October 10th, in conformity with Brigade orders, the Battalion moved off from L'Epinette and marched in column of route with the other infantry Units of the Brigade to Maretz, and thence along the old Roman Road to the northern end of Reumont where the Battalion deployed and advanced with three companies in the line. This advance was on a single Battalion front. With the 5th Inniskilling Fusiliers following us in support, we pushed on through Gattigny Wood, where we came upon an abandoned enemy Howitzer, of which more anon, and reached the village of Reumont at 6 15 a.m. Here we

formed up for attack in the following order: "B" Company on the right, "C" Company in the centre, and "D" Company on the left. "A" Company was kept in reserve with Battalion H.Q. "D" Company was under orders to keep level with troops of the Division on our left and our other Companies to conform to this movement. The attack started at 6 45 a.m., and the Battalion almost immediately came under very heavy fire, but pushed on through the enemy barrage, and the three leading companies reached the line of the Le Cateau-Inchy Road at 8 16 a.m.

The three leading Companies suffered heavy casualties in crossing the road, but they pushed on until they reached the line of a sunken road some 1,000 yards west of the village of Montay. Here they reorganised and remained until late afternoon.

During the advance "D" Company on the extreme left received a severe handling, but was led by Capt. Pennington with great dash.

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon orders were received that the Battalion was to attack the village of Montay and join up with the King's Liverpools on the high ground. Owing to the late hour at which orders were received, and the approach of darkness, Company Commanders had no time to carry out a reconnaissance before moving to the attack.

"A" Company 6th Lancashire Fusiliers (the Battalion Reserve), along with "A" and "B" Companies 5th Inniskillings and the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, advanced under considerable machine gun fire. The attack, however, did not make much headway owing to the strength of the enemy's resistance, the darkness, and the fatigue of our troops. Capt. White with "A" Company managed to obtain a footing on the outskirts of the village, an admirable piece of work, but as his position in Montay would be a very unfavourable one in daylight, he was ordered to withdraw shortly after midnight and rejoin Battalion H.Q., which he did.

At 4 30, however, in the morning of October 11th, a message was received from Brigade which ordered that Montay should be held at all costs, and "B" Company, commanded by Capt. Vestey-Jones, was immediately despatched to reoccupy the position, and at 6 a.m. a message was received from that officer to say that this had been done. One platoon of the 5th Inniskillings remained in

a sunken road as a support to "B" Company in Montay. During the day the enemy artillery kept up counter battery and indiscriminate fire on our positions with but little effect.

At 2 30 p.m. Colonel Gross and the Adjutant visited the outpost line in Montay and reorganised the defence.

At 4 o'clock orders were received for the relief of the Battalion by the 6th Dublin Fusiliers. This was cancelled at 5 o'clock by a Brigade order which read as follows :

The 198th Brigade will be relieved in the left sector of the 66th Divisional Front by the 4th South African Battalion and two Companies of the 1st South African Battalion. The 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers will be relieved by one Company, 1st South African Infantry.

The relief was completed at 11 30 p.m., and the Battalion marched back to billets in Reumont.

Our casualties during the 4 days of fighting had been :

#### Officers.

Killed.—2/Lt. C. Jackson.

Wounded.—2/Lt. J. R. Smith-Saville

„ 2/Lt. T. C. Marriott.

„ 2/Lt. P. Baker.

#### Other Ranks.

Killed	...	...	...	...	...	15
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Wounded	...	...	...	...	...	163
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Missing	...	...	...	...	...	13
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The above account has been compiled from The Battalion War Diary. Capt. D. Pennington, M.C., sends the following account which instils life into the dry bones of the Official Record :

After the fall of Villers Outreaux the Battalion was lying in reserve in open country before Serain. To the right front was Premont, hidden by a screen of trees broken only where the high embanked road led from the village westward through our lines. Right and left of this road in the low lying fields supply tanks were advancing through the infantry supports and field batteries were replying to the enemy fire.

Suddenly against the sky a dark column appeared from among the trees moving along the road towards us. Our glasses showed a nondescript crowd of civilians; old men, women, and children flying from Premont towards our lines before the attack was pushed home. The more fortunate were dragging their goods and chattels on carts, handcarts, wheelbarrows, and even prams, but many were bent under heavy bundles. Fighting was going on on both sides, yet that little straggling column moved to safety, not a shot or shell appearing to fall on the road.

The night of October 8th/9th was remarkable for the very heavy bombing of our supporting lines by relays of enemy aircraft which continued with short intervals from nightfall until we moved forward to our jumping-off position next morning. The enemy had lost so much ground during the day that he was under the immediate necessity of getting his guns safely to the rear, and so employed his air force in an attempt to disorganise our supply columns.

The advance south of Elincourt the following morning was almost unopposed. The few casualties we suffered were from our own barrage early in the day and from enemy machine gunners when we reached our objective. While lying under cover of the bank along the Maretz-Clary Road, the South African Infantry, with a body of cavalry on their left flank, passed through us at the double and charged the edge of Gattigny Wood. It was a very fine sight, but the cavalry were held up by a field fence of barbed wire near the wood, and the horses suffered severely from M.G. fire. With the retirement of the enemy from the ridge and wood, and the taking over of our job by the South Africans, we were allowed a little rest and refreshment. It was while we were placing our picket line that we came across an enemy Howitzer, abandoned, and with its muzzle in splinters, and in a weak moment reported it. That night was bitterly cold, and those men who carried picks or spades and could dig a hole as a shelter from the wind were the only ones who got any rest.

Very early next morning (October 10th) we were roused and after an issue of iron rations moved off towards Maretz. We had difficulty in getting through

the town in the dark owing to the slow moving tanks in the narrow streets and the lines of transport. However, when we reached the long straight road to Maurois we were able to step out briskly. All along we saw evidences of the hot time our cavalry had had the day before in this open country, dead troop horses being very numerous.

On approaching Reumont it was noticeable that almost every house had a white sheet or tablecloth hanging from the window, or rigged up on the roof, and we afterwards learned that the inhabitants had done this on the advice of the Germans to avoid bombardment by our guns on the retirement of the enemy. The Brigadier met us in the village street, and by way of encouragement informed us as we trooped past that the enemy were in full retreat and that we had an easy job on. As we left the village we deployed in the open country to the right of the road and took up position for the attack, three companies in the line—"B" on the right, "C" (on whom we were to align) in the centre, "D" on the left, and "A" in reserve. We did not move off right away, so had time to look around and to make a little inroad on our rations. The country hereabouts was level and open, and we had an extensive view to the front and flanks. To the right, as far as the eye could see, our troops were forming in one line for the attack, quite like an old time battle; no attempt at cover; all in the open. To the front we had a clear view for fully two thousand yards, but Le Cateau, which was the object of our attack, lay hidden in the hollow of the River Selle. Five hundred yards in advance of us, a battery of field guns were shelling the town (only light guns had been able to keep pace with the advance during the two previous days), while further ahead near the ridge overlooking the river were cavalry pickets which had formed the outpost line during the night. Our left was open, but away in the distance troops could be seen moving into position. The enemy were very quiet, only an occasional H.E. shell exploding well to our front.

On moving forward, the cavalry informed us that the enemy were keeping such a hot fire on the ridge overlooking the stream that they had hardly dared

to show themselves since daybreak. As we neared the ridge shelling became more frequent, but still could not be considered anything but light, and there appeared to be no enemy air reconnaissance. The fields were fenced with barbed wire, and we had to send men forward from every platoon to cut it so that our formation should not be broken. We approached the ridge along a gentle grassy slope, and the enemy barrage came down at the same time their position came into view. The enemy gunners were firing across the valley over level sights, and many shells were ricochetting along the ground. It was here we came on the Argyles digging in, and our left flank was thus closed.

The enemy position was a formidable one. To our front the ground made an easy descent to a road below; there was then broken ground to the stream and a steeper rise farther back along which ran a road, and higher still a railway embankment. On the far side of the stream there was much fenced country.

"D" Company and part of "C" went over the ridge and down towards the stream. They suffered heavily on the open slope, and on reaching the road in the bottom were compelled to seek cover, first behind a long wall bordering on the road, and when that became a target for trench mortars amongst bushes and hollows. They were now out of sight of the main body, who were digging in, and had to remain under a mixed fire from the enemy all day. Fortunately the grass was long, the ground soft, and so the enemy could not see the effect of their firing, and casualties were comparatively few. To this small party the day seemed terribly long. Just before dusk our barrage came down heavily; the enemy replied by putting one in the valley, and then in the twilight our main body swept down the slope, and in the growing darkness began that struggle for the outskirts of the town which lasted several days.

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From the experience of the recent fighting along the whole of the IV. Army Front, from information received, and from air observation, it was now obvious that the enemy had decided to put up a strong defence along the line of the Selle river, and that the position he had taken up

was too strong to be rushed, but could only be taken by an organised attack adequately supported by artillery. It was necessary, therefore, to organise a general attack without delay, and the Commander-in-Chief after a conference with Army Commanders, issued orders for the offensive to be resumed on a large scale. The period between October 11th and 17th was spent in completing preparations for this attack, which was to form the 8th Phase of the 4th Army Advance and to be known as the Battle of the Selle. The Battalion spent October 12th in billets at Maurois resting, cleaning up, and reorganising. The Battalion "B" team, which consisted of 7 officers and 108 other ranks, here rejoined the main body.

Next day the Battalion moved back to Maretz as the village of Maurois was under shell fire, and other Battalions when in occupation had suffered numerous casualties from gas.

We arrived in Maretz shortly before midday and took up our abode in comfortable billets. In view of further fighting at a very early date reorganisation and re-equipment were pressed forward. As our losses had been heavy and no reinforcements were available, Companies were reduced to two platoons, each consisting of three sections. On October 15th the Corps Commander, Lieut.-General Sir T. L. N. Morland, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., visited the Battalion and inspected billets. He expressed his appreciation of the good work carried out in the recent operations. Capt. Simpson (2/8th L.F.), who was with Colonel Little's composite Battalion during the March fighting, joined the Battalion and was posted to "D" Company.

One humorous incident occurred whilst at Maretz. Capt. Pennington had reported the finding of the abandoned enemy Howitzer in Gattigny Wood, and was detailed to locate it. He rode out on two separate afternoons for that purpose, complete with paint pot and brush so that he could mark it when found, as a war trophy of the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers. His exertions in this direction were finally crowned with success, but not before he had admitted the truth of Talleyrand's cynical maxim: "Mais surtout pas trop de zèle," and had resolved to report no more stranded guns. The predominant impression left upon us by our short stay in Maretz was that made by the civilian inhabitants. There were no young men amongst them, these had all been drawn away to enforced

labour with the Boche. The old men and women and children who remained were a pathetic sight. After the restrictions of a hostile rule they were like uncaged birds, and at first hardly seemed to realise that they were free once more, yet you could see their spirit returning day by day, and it was marvellous how they managed to produce French flags which must have been hidden away for four years or more against the joyful day. The tales they had to tell of Boche oppression and cruelty made the blood boil: for instance, he (the Boche) placed a delayed action mine beneath Maretz Church, which blew up some 48 hours after he had been driven from the town and left of the building nothing but a heap of bricks. He was a canting hypocrite, too; in life he behaved often like a devil to prisoners and civilians, but if you took a walk through a Boche cemetery you would find that when dead he was invariably tucked away with a pious inscription over his head to inform you what an amiable fellow he had really been. But perhaps we wronged him and all really bad Germans were blown to bits and so could have no inscription put over their heads.

Before describing in detail the part taken by the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers in this action it will be well to state the plan of attack of the 66th Division. The following extract is taken from "The Story of the 4th Army," pages 221-222.

The objective of the 66th Division was that part of the long ridge, west of Bazuel, which lies between the Le Cateau-Pommereuil Road and the Richemont River. The attack presented considerable difficulties. Le Cateau, east of the Selle, was in the hands of the enemy and would have to be cleared; the Selle, which was under the enemy's observation, could only be crossed by bridges. Furthermore, it had been decided that Le Cateau was to be encircled by the 66th Division from the north and the 50th Division from the south, the troops of the two Divisions meeting at the eastern exit to the town. As the troops of the 50th Division had considerably further to go than the 66th Division the synchronisation of the attacks of the 66th and 50th Divisions required careful adjustment. In order to ensure this the South African Brigade was ordered to start at 7 47 a.m., two hours and twenty-seven minutes after "Zero." Attacking on a front of 900 yards, it was to cross the Selle by eight bridges

placed by the engineers across the river immediately north of Le Cateau. At 8.20 a.m., three hours after "Zero," at which hour it was estimated that the attacking Brigades of the 66th and 50th Divisions would have joined hands east of the town, the 198th Brigade was to begin clearing Le Cateau, starting from the north-east. After the capture of its objective by the South African Brigade special instructions were issued to ensure the clearing up of the line of railway and the formation of a defensive flank as far north as Montay. The South African Brigade, in its attack, was to advance in a south-easterly direction under a creeping barrage, with its right flank resting on the Faubourg St. Martin-Faubourg de Landrecies Road, and after gaining touch with the 50th Division near the Faubourg de Landrecies, was to move forward with its flank along the Le Cateau-Pommereuil Road. The left of the Brigade was to advance due east through Baillon Farm, to the level crossing just east of it, where a strong post was to be established in order to protect the left flank of the Division. After the line of the railway had been captured and contact obtained with the 50th Division, the advance was to be continued, pivoting on the level crossing until the objective of the Division was reached.

This was the scheme of operations. How far it had to be modified actually owing to the strength of the enemy defence and the heavy casualties suffered by the South African Brigade may in part appear during the course of the following narrative.

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October 16th, 1918. On receipt of Brigade Orders the Battalion moved forward to Reumont, under the command of Colonel Gross, leaving Major Seckham, who was now second-in-command (as Major Townsend had been appointed to command the 5th Inniskillings), in charge of the "B" teams, who were left in Maretz. We arrived in Reumont at 12.30 p.m., and at 2 o'clock the C.O. summoned Company Commanders to a conference at Battalion H.Q. The following officers attended: "A" Company, Lieut. J. W. Deane; "B" Company, Capt. Rutherford; "C" Company, Lieut. F. Stoker; "D" Company, Capt. C. H. Potter.

At this conference the general scheme of the forthcoming operations was explained, but the exact part to be

played by the Battalion depended upon circumstances, as it was to form the Divisional Reserve. On receipt of further orders the Battalion moved forward out of the village at 5.30 in the afternoon and took over quarters vacated by a Battalion of the South African Brigade, which consisted of pit shelters in a turnip field on the right of the old Roman road about a mile and a half in front of the village of Reumont. Battalion H.Q. managed to secure a sail cover which formed a rough sort of marquee. Our Company Field Kitchens came up with us, and rations were easily got up from the Transport Lines at Reumont, so that we were able to get a hot meal and spend a fairly comfortable night, although the weather was cold and wet. Next morning (October 17th) about 11 o'clock, the Battalion, which was in Divisional Reserve, received orders to attack Le Cateau Station, and we were informed that the South African Brigade were in possession of the Railway Triangle to the north of it, and that the Scottish Horse were well forward to the south. The disposition for the attack was as follows: "A" and "B" Companies were to attack with "D" Company in support, and "C" Company in reserve. Companies to move forward in artillery formation and at 300 paces distance.

The attack was launched, and we got well forward, taking advantage of the cover afforded by a steep ravine which dropped down into the Selle valley. As soon, however, as our leading companies entered the valley they came under heavy machine gun fire from the opposite slope, and the enemy's artillery began to drop shells along the line of the ravine: at 1.25 p.m. orders were received that the Battalion was to break off the action and return to Divisional Reserve, as neither the South African Brigade nor the Scottish Horse were as far advanced as was previously reported. By this time, however, our three leading companies were across the Selle River, so that it took considerable time to get orders through to them and for the withdrawal to be effected. However, by three o'clock in the afternoon the Battalion had been successfully disengaged and was back again in its old quarters in the turnip field, having suffered only slight casualties.

Shortly after midnight Company Commanders were again summoned to a conference at Battalion H.Q., as orders had been received that the Battalion was to proceed to Le Cateau to relieve the 6th Battalion Dublin Fusiliers

and complete the clearing of the town. We moved off at 2 45 a.m., followed Cæsar's shadowy legions down the old Roman road, struck off down the Inchy-Le Cateau Road, and arrived on the outskirts of the town after about an hour's march. Colonel Gross and Company Commanders proceeded to the H.Q. of the 6th Battalion Dublin Fusiliers, which was established in a house near by, where they found Colonel Little (the same officer who was in command of the Composite Battalion during the 5th Army retreat in March). He had already sent for guides from each of his companies to take forward our companies to the area of the town held by the respective company of the Dublins that each was to relieve.

A long wait ensued, which was rendered none too comfortable by the fact that the enemy was shelling the town in bursts with high explosive and gas shells. The night was damp, and an autumnal mist, combined with acrid smoke and gas, made an unpleasant atmospheric mixture which caused us to keep putting on and taking off our gas masks in bouts of spasmodic uncertainty. Morning broke, and still the guides had not arrived. The reason for this delay was that the Dublin Fusiliers were "mopping up" the town. There were many Germans in the houses, and the extent of the town, which was shrouded in heavy mist, made the clearing a very slow business.

A further conference was held at the 6th Dublin Fusiliers Headquarters: the outcome of which was that our four Company Commanders with their runners, accompanied by a guide who knew the way, started out for the Advanced Headquarters of the Dublins which was established in the centre of the town somewhere near the church. Let us join this small party and try to get a view of Le Cateau as it appeared in the early morning of October 18th, 1918, or rather, as much of it as could be seen through the misty eyepieces of a box respirator. The town lies low, and was under a heavy pall of mist, smoke, and gas. It was a slow eerie business stumbling in gas masks along a street cumbered with rubble brought down by the bombardment. The bridge over the Selle River had been demolished, but we crossed over by a way which had been broken through the ground floor rooms of a building which spanned the river on the left-hand side of the broken bridge. This brought us to the bottom of the main street leading straight up to the church. Here we

halted to regain our breath and to polish up the glass of our eye pieces in the hope of adding a foot or two to our range of vision. Then we started to tackle the ascent, burdened with packs which seemed extraordinarily heavy, and afflicted by breathing which was unpleasantly short. A couple of stranded Boche motor lorries, with their dead drivers, loomed out of the fog as we moved up the street, and occasional stray bullets whistled across to flatten out with an unpleasant sound against the brickwork. However, at last we topped the rise, turned along a street to the right, and were shepherded by our guide into a commodious cellar in which was established the Advanced Headquarters of the 6th Dublins, under Major Luke. The atmosphere of that cellar was too unhealthy for general conversation; the spokesmen, in order to make themselves heard, took off their gas masks, and said what was absolutely necessary, then refixed the clips on their noses, replaced the mouthpieces in their mouths, and returned to the serious business of breathing with the avidity with which a baby returns to its bottle. Details of the relief, therefore, were soon settled and our runners sent back to Colonel Gross to bring forward their respective companies. With Major Luke there was an officer from each company that had to be relieved, so that when our men arrived each Company could go its own individual way under its own guide. Even so, the relief was a slow business. As we moved through the streets it came as a surprise to find that a considerable number of civilians still remained in the town: we caught an occasional glimpse of them through cellar openings, and they were obviously in a state of great distress and fear through shells and gas. At one place a dead girl was lying on the pavement, killed by a shell splinter which had caught her on the temple, but war tends to bring all things, animate and inanimate, to a common denominator of ruin, and even a woman's corpse raised hardly more feeling than the sight of shattered stone or splintered wood. By ten o'clock the relief was completed, and our three forward companies had taken over positions on the eastern outskirts of Le Cateau in the following order: "D" Company held the Faubourg St. Martin with one platoon in front on the railway cutting (which platoon was in touch with the South Africans who continued the line northwards to the end of the cutting near the level crossing at Baillon Farm; beyond

that point the railway ran through a second cutting, which was held by the enemy, and the South African line bent back towards the village of Montay). "C" Company occupied the Faubourg de Landrecies and continued the line southwards until its junction with "B" Company just beyond the railway bridge over the Le Cateau-Bazuel Road; whilst from that point "B" Company continued the line to the bank of the Selle River on the west of the town. By the time midday arrived the town had taken on a very different aspect to the one it showed in the earlier hours of the day. The enemy had discontinued gas shelling, the mist had cleared away, the sun was out, the snipers had either surrendered or been killed, and, above all, our gas masks were off and we could see and move about in comfort. The civilian inhabitants, too, had come out of their cellars and proceeded to treat us as their deliverers with "Gallic" fervour. It was rather an embarrassing situation when at your approach old women who had sallied forth to find water for their morning ablutions dropped their buckets, threw their arms round your neck and kissed you on both cheeks; you felt touched by the honour, but wished at the same time that soap and water could have taken precedence to those greetings in the public street.

At 3 p.m. Company Commanders were summoned to a conference at Battalion H.Q., and were informed by Colonel Gross that the Battalion had been ordered to capture the high ground to the east of the town which formed the objective of the Divisional attack.

On the previous day the South African Brigade, after that wonderful attack of theirs when they crossed the river, smashed through the belts of barbed wire, carried the enemy defences, and established themselves along the line of the railway cutting, had pushed forward in an attempt to carry this ridge, but it was an impossible feat in broad daylight, and they had been driven back with heavy loss.

The Battalion assembled for the attack in the clay pits in the Faubourg de Landrecies, situated at the side of the railway line, and some 200 yards in front of the Le Cateau-Pommereuil Road. The dispositions for the attack were soon completed. Our objective was the crest of the ridge which lay between the two roads that ran eastward in the direction of Pommereuil. The attack was to be on a three company front, "D" Company on the

left, "C" Company in the centre, and "B" Company on the right, whilst "A" Company formed the Battalion reserve. This was one of the numerous occasions which caused us to appreciate the military qualities possessed by Colonel Gross. A less experienced commander might easily have jeopardised the success of the whole "show" by committing us to a frontal attack up a bare slope in daylight, but by his orders the advance was not to start until 5 15 p.m., so that we could take advantage of the falling dusk. We rested, therefore, for a time in the shelter of the clay pits, smoked a contemplative cigarette, and watched the November sun set slowly down. Some of us perchance wondering the while if we should see another sunset, and in the mood to agree with Francis Thompson that

Never alike, the sun goes down  
Behind the self same hill.

Let us get back, however, to actual facts. The following account has been sent by Capt. Potter, O.C. "D" Company, and is compiled from letters written within a day or so of the event:

I had been given as my company objective the road running along the top of the ridge some 300 yards from our starting point, my left flank to rest on the cross roads. I was also instructed to get in touch with the South Africans on the railway cutting on my left and get their co-operation. Capt. Simpson went over to them to try and arrange this, but reported on his return that they were expecting a relief and could not co-operate. Hence, in the advance our left flank would be unprotected. I reported this fact to the C.O. At 5 15 p.m. the attack started just as dusk began to fall. Simpson's platoon was on the left of the company front, and he had instructions to work up the side of the road. Sergeant Clulow was on the right with his platoon, and I, with my Company Headquarters, arranged to move up the line of a hedge to the left of a small orchard which was formed roughly the centre line of my company front. When the attack started Sergeant Clulow's platoon was held up through lack of cover, and things seemed to hang fire a bit. I pushed forward with my Company H.Q.,

and reinforced Simpson's platoon; we then worked up the road, detached one section to deal with the Boche machine gun in a ruined house on the left, and soon saw a wonderful sight. Some 50 yards in front of us and slightly to the right outlined against the sky, above the bank of the sunken road, was a line of Boche helmets, the owners of which were busily engaged firing to their direct front, obviously intent upon holding up the advance of Clulow's platoon, and quite oblivious of our approach on their flank. We got well round to the back of them before they spotted us, shot two through the head, and then closed in upon them with the cry "Hinden auf Allemands," which produced a unanimous show of hands. We marshalled our prisoners, who threw off their equipment and side arms, "fell in" in an orderly fashion, and were sent off down to Battalion H.Q. under escort. They were tall, straight, young lads from Schleswig-Holstein, and were anxious to let us know they only surrendered because surrounded. After their departure Simpson and I shook hands with one another and declared it was a "bon" war. There are few people who really enjoy fighting, but it must be admitted that on occasions there is nothing quite like it in the way of excitement. Sergeant Clulow's platoon soon arrived to reinforce us, and combining with "C" Company under Lieut. Stoker we pushed farther to the right along the road and scuppered another party of Boche which we sent down under escort after their comrades. The cat was now fairly amongst the pigeons. Verey lights kept shooting up in front of us, plaintive cries of "Kamerad" came out of the gloom, and indistinct forms could be seen flitting about. I took a section out after some Boche who were massed some distance away on our right who seemed inclined to surrender; but they would not come to meet us and I got the "wind up," as we seemed so far from home. They looked so many and we were but few; so we blazed into them with our Lewis gun, and after that beat a strategic retreat. Simpson then went off in another direction to explore a ruin which looked like a strong post, and returned with the only remnant of the garrison, a tall sergeant from Hamburg. He seemed quite pleased to be

taken prisoner. Before being marched away he took off his "tin lid," spat on it, and gave it a hefty drop kick in the direction of the German lines exclaiming at the same time, "Kreiges Kaput," then made an "about turn," produced from his pocket his little round forage cap, stuck it at a jaunty angle on his head, and was ready to start life as a prisoner of war.

With the first batch of prisoners I had sent a message to the C.O. for reinforcements from "A" Company, and when these arrived we were enabled to link up with the South Africans on our left and secure that flank. The Battalion was in full possession of its objective by 6.30 p.m., and started to consolidate; the whole affair had gone like clock-work. We had captured thirty-five prisoners and six machine guns, and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, whilst our losses had been light: Officers, nil; other ranks, 4 killed, 12 wounded, and 2 missing. We had just settled down about 11 o'clock to what promised to be a freezing night in the open, when the 9th Manchesters arrived to take over our line, and we were withdrawn to the Faubourg de Landrecies, where we found our Field Kitchens and a hot meal awaiting us.

We brought away the captured machine guns as trophies, and every member of the company had some souvenir or other in the shape of automatics, field glasses, trench knives, or "Gott mit Uns" belts, for the Boche machine gunners had been elaborately equipped.

The Boche vented their spite on the town that night by shelling it persistently with gas and high explosive in a proportion of about 3 to 1. The air was filled continuously with the whimpering drone of the gas shells, the most miserable sound on earth, followed by their muffled explosion which mingled with the heavier crash of the burst of the high explosive shells. To the civilian inhabitants it was a night of sorrow wherein many died. We were, fortunately, on the outskirts of the town, and only got an occasional sprinkling which drove us out for short periods from the houses and stables on the floors of which we slept. Our Field Kitchens, however, fared badly on their return journey through the town to our Transport

Lines at Reumont. C.Q.M.S. Tancred of "D" Company got gassed that night, and died some days later of septic pneumonia. He was one of the last of the original members of the Battalion. A gallant lad of ability and resource who served his company well.

October 19th was an easier day, for which we were devoutly thankful, as the three previous ones had been somewhat strenuous. "A" and "C" Companies took over part of the line to the right of the position captured by the Battalion on the previous day, whilst "B" and "D" Companies remained in reserve in the Faubourg de Landrecies. In the early morning of October 20th two companies of the 5th Inniskillings relieved our two companies in the line, these withdrew and rejoined the other half of the Battalion. After an early breakfast the Battalion started to move off at 6 o'clock. Our destination was the turnip field whence we had started some three long days before, and our route was through Le Cateau. As the town was being subjected to a long range bombardment companies moved off at intervals in sequence, a platoon at a time. Fortunately each got through safely, but there were some narrow squeaks from shells which fell just ahead or just behind the moving platoons, and at one point near the church a large block of buildings was on fire and the narrow street was as hot as an oven. We all felt very much happier when we were clear of the town and once again upon the Roman road, whilst the sight of our old quarters in the turnip field aroused genuine enthusiasm. Here we rested for a while in pouring rain, and at midday the Field Kitchens came rumbling out from Reumont and provided us with a hot meal. Later in the afternoon we marched back to the village of Maurois and billeted there for the night. This marked the end of a spell of fighting in which satisfactory results had been achieved and our losses had been slight.

Our total casualties for the whole period were: Officers, killed, nil; wounded, 2/Lt. R. F. Hinson; other ranks, killed, 7; wounded, 40; missing, 3.

On the following day, October 21st, the Battalion moved to Premont, where the "B" teams rejoined, and the next few days were spent in resting, bathing, and cleaning up, in preparation for a visit from the Divisional Commander on October 23rd. It is pleasant to know that Major-General Bethell highly praised the Battalion on that

occasion. On that day, also, the following congratulatory message was received from the Brigadier and read out on parade.

6th Lancashire Fusiliers.  
 5th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.  
 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers.  
 190th L.T.M.B.  
 No. 3 Signal Section.  
 198th Infantry Brigade H.Q.

The B.G.C. wishes to congratulate the Brigade on their performance of the last 12 days.

During that period they have advanced  $13\frac{3}{4}$  miles on  $10\frac{1}{2}$  of which they were actually in touch with the enemy, have captured 484 prisoners, 23 field guns, 3 heavy Howitzers, and a large number of machine guns, in addition to inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

Their final effort was to clear the town of Le Cateau, east of the River Selle, so liberating over 1,000 French civilians who have been under German domination for over four years.

This result has been obtained by the hard work and unselfishness of all ranks, coupled with a determination to do their duty and get to grips with the enemy in spite of all deterrents.

The B. G. C. regrets the casualties sustained in fighting a stubborn enemy, but he knows that now the Brigade has got the measure of the enemy, and that he can rely on them in future operations to do equally good work in bringing the war to a speedy and victorious conclusion.

21. 10. 18.

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We stayed at Premont until November 2nd, and during that period little occurred that was worthy of record.

2/Lt. A. Inglis proceeded on leave to the United Kingdom en route for India, and was struck off the strength of the Battalion.

The following officers joined and were posted as under :





- 2/Lt. A. C. Gallaway to "B" Company.
- 2/Lt. H. Wilson to "B" Company.
- 2/Lt. G. L. Whitehead to "C" Company.
- 2/Lt. J. R. Davies to "C" Company.
- 2/Lt. P. L. Keighley to "D" Company.
- 2/Lt. J. A. McKechnie to "A" Company.

A draft of some hundred men joined and were distributed amongst the various companies. This draft was the result of a "Comb out of back areas," and was composed of young men with considerable overseas service, which so far had been restricted to Base depots and Lines of Communication. They were of good physique, but did not appreciate the change to a more exciting sphere of activity, and they proved to be but an indifferent accession to our fighting strength. To apply the system of compulsion to Military Service may have been a necessity, but it led to a diminution of vigour and fighting efficiency. A volunteer will always be worth two pressed men. It is significant in this connection that the fighting qualities of the Australians and South Africans were never more brilliantly displayed than during the closing phases of the war, and that these two forces were both raised and maintained for the whole period of the war by a system of voluntary enlistment.

During our stay at Premont an order was issued to the effect that a Regimental flag should be flown at Battalion H.Q., and red was the colour allotted by Brigade to our Battalion. In consonance with this order a flag was made with the Coat of Arms of Le Cateau on one side and "Battalion H.Q. XX" on the other.

The red background was cut out from an old ecclesiastical banner found in a partly demolished house at Le Cateau whilst the legend "Battalion H.Q. XX" on the one side was formed of gold braid obtained from the same banner. The arms of Le Cateau, which were in blue and gold, on the reverse side were made; the blue out of some cotton found in the town of Le Cateau and the gold from the regulation wound stripe. The size of this flag was twenty-one inches square, and was the work of No. 1165 Sergeant Seery M., assisted by No. 33,871 Corporal Cohen I. It is a thousand pities that this flag, which was brought back by the Battalion cadre along with the Battalion stores to Rochdale in May, 1919, should have

gone astray. Surely, if the matter was taken up, even after this lapse of time by the present Territorial authorities, this interesting and historical relic could be found.

On November 2nd the Battalion marched to billets at Honnechy. It was in this village that our billeting officer, 2/Lt. C. W. Jones, ran across Capt. H. C. Gill, M.C., now Staff Captain in the 32nd Division, who was very excited at seeing the old Battalion sign chalked up. Unfortunately he could not stop to greet old friends, and they on their side would dearly have liked to see him again and to congratulate him on the M.C. which he had recently won whilst serving with the 16th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers.

The late autumnal weather had proved trying to men who had spent years in Salonica, and during the month of November 81 cases of sickness were admitted to hospital. On November 3rd the Battalion marched to Le Cateau, here the "B" teams were left, and the next day the Battalion, under the command of Colonel Gross, who could not bear to forego his right to lead the Battalion into action, moved forward to billets in Pommereuil. Here Company Commanders conferences were held at 11 30 and 2 p.m., at both of which the forthcoming operations were the subject of explanation and discussion. In the very early hours of November 5th a Warning Order to move was received, and at 8 30 a.m. the Battalion moved out in the direction of Landrecies. After an hour and a half of marching we halted until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when we moved into billets near the railway station in the north-western outskirts of Landrecies.

Next day the Battalion marched to Basse Novelles, where it remained for the night November 6th-7th.

At 3 p.m. on November 7th another forward move was made to Dompierre, which was reached shortly after 6 p.m. At 7 p.m. orders were received for the Battalion to relieve the 9th Devons of the 25th Division, who lay in support to the main line. We marched out of Dompierre at 8 45 p.m., and the relief was completed by 11 o'clock.

On November 8th, in accordance with Brigade orders, the Battalion assembled at 7 a.m., and at 8 45 a.m. Battalion H.Q., "B" and "D" Companies moved forward to La Croiselles Farm, whilst "A" and "C" Companies

moved up in close support to 5th Inniskilling Fusiliers. At 11 20 a.m. O.C. "A" Company, which was on the right, reported that he was in close support to the 5th Inniskillings, who were held up by machine gun fire, and that he was in touch with the King's Liverpools on his right. O.C. "C" Company reported at the same hour that he was in close support to the left company of 5th Inniskillings, who were held up in front of a small wood, but that he was not in touch with troops on his left.

At 12 15 p.m. the 5th Inniskillings were reported to have crossed the Avesnes-Maubeuge Road, and at 12 55 p.m. information was received that our line was established on the Avesnes-Maubeuge Road along the whole length of the Divisional Front, at La Jonquiere Farm, and at the same time "B" Company moved forward and took up a position in the centre between "A" and "C" Companies along the line of the road. Orders were issued to these three leading companies to commence the advance on the final objective at 2 p.m.

Meanwhile, Brigadier-General Hunter had visited Battalion Headquarters, and in consequence of the 5th Connaughts being held up on our right, had ordered one section of the 100th Machine Gun Company to report to the Battalion to be used if necessity arose to form a defensive flank in that direction.

At 2 p.m. the advance commenced, and at 3 30 p.m. information was received from O.C. "C" Company (Capt. Ridler) that the enemy were putting up a strong resistance with machine guns from the houses of La Cornette, and that one platoon, having suffered heavy casualties, required support. One platoon of the 6th Dublin Fusiliers at once moved forward to assist the left flank of "C" Company, and a further platoon was promised if necessary. O.C. "C" Company reported shortly afterwards that the platoon of the Dublins were in line with his company and were pushing forward, but that he was not in touch with "B" Company on his right. No information had been received from either "A" or "B" Company since 2 o'clock, and orderlies, who had been sent forward with messages, returned at 6 45 p.m., having failed to locate either company. Information was received shortly afterwards from these two companies to the effect that they had been held up by machine gun fire both from the front and in enfilade, and that as the troops on their right and left were not in

line they had been unable to push forward to their final objective.

The situation at 7 30 p.m. was as follows : "A," "B," and "C" Companies were holding a line some three-quarters of a mile east of the Avesnes-Maubeuge Road, which formed the second line of defence, and was held by part of the 100th Machine Gun Company and Lewis Guns. The three front companies, however, were not in touch with troops either on their right or left. One section of Trench Mortars and one section of the 100th Machine Gun Company were in reserve with our Battalion Headquarters at La Jonquiere.

At 9 30 p.m. touch was gained with the Scottish Horse on our left. This was the position of affairs at the end of an exhausting day. The weather had been cold and wet, the enemy had been following his usual tactics of fighting a delaying action with a strong rearguard of machine gunners, and those Boche machine gunners were without doubt a very efficient body of men ; let honour be given where honour is due ; for days they formed an impenetrable screen between the advance of a victorious Army on the one side and the retreat of their own demoralised main body on the other. Their position was a hopeless one, but they fought steadfastly up to the inevitable end. On our side this open fighting was a curious sort of business, we started out in open order and walked across the country for half a mile or so at a time with no evidence of any enemy out in front, until all at once we reached the top of a rise on the line of a sunken road which the enemy had "taped," when we suffered a dozen casualties in as many seconds. In the old days of trench warfare a Company Commander would consider a dozen casualties in the day as an exceptionally heavy loss. We are not speaking, of course, of trench to trench attack, which is the bloodiest of all forms of fighting, but just a normal tour of trench duty. Now in open warfare, however, a company could go gaily on striding across country for hours at a time without a single casualty, and then walk into a machine gun or artillery barrage. when, in the space of two minutes, a Company Commander could with ease lose what an American would describe as "Half his damned outfit." Our total casualties during this day's fighting were : Officers, killed, 2/Lt. H. Wilson ; other ranks, killed, 5 ; wounded, 31. Lieut. Wilson was killed

on his first day of fighting, and with him two N.C.O.'s, who had been with the 12th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers since its formation. These were the last casualties that the Battalion were destined to suffer, and in a way they were the most tragic, since their relatives at home heard of the cessation of hostilities before the dread War Office notification came to change their joy into the deepest sorrow.

At 3 15 a.m. on the morning of November 9th information was received from Brigade that troops of the Division on our left had made a considerable advance without encountering any opposition and were anxious about their right flank; one platoon, therefore, of "C" Company, under 2/Lt. L. G. Gibson, was ordered to move forward along the Sars-Potieries Road to ascertain if the enemy had withdrawn from our front, and, if possible, to establish a strong post on the western edge of Beugnies Wood, at the same time "A" and "B" Companies were ordered to send out officer patrols to the line of a road which ran from the edge of the wood across to the edge of La Villette Wood. If it was found that the enemy were not holding the line of this road our patrols had orders to remain there until daylight.

At 7 a.m. "C" Company had established a strong post as directed, and were in touch with the Scottish Horse; at that hour also "D" Company moved forward from Battalion Reserve at La Jonquiere, and by 9 o'clock had taken up a position round about Copreaux Farm without having encountered any opposition, whilst "A" and "B" Companies remained on the line of the road which ran almost due south from La Cornette until 11 35 a.m., when "B" Company moved forward in support of "D" Company.

At 12 15 p.m. a report was received from O.C. 12th Lancers Patrol that Felleries was clear of the enemy, that the railway crossing had been blown up, and that the enemy, whilst holding with machine guns buildings between Felleries and Beugnies, were retiring across country in an easterly direction.

Our line remained stationary for the remainder of the day, with the exception that "D" Company, in conjunction with the 100th Machine Gun Company, established forward posts in the direction of Beugnies. The Battalion

found billets that night in the capacious outbuildings of Copreaux Farm.

Let us now take a general survey of the position along the 4th Army front. The enemy was in full retreat, and the rate at which the pursuit could be carried on was governed by the question of supply, our rail heads were 40 miles back, and from these supplies and ammunition had to be carried up by motor transport. In the forward areas the roads had been blocked by mine craters, and the infantry who had passed beyond the forward limit of the motor lorries had to be supplied by horse transport. Under these circumstances it was obvious that if the Army continued to advance there would be a complete breakdown on the supply organisation in the near future. Consequently on November 9th Sir Henry Rawlinson decided that the main bodies of his Corps should be distributed in depth on the west of the La Capelle-Avesnes-Maubeuge Road with only an outpost line held to the east of it, whilst a small mobile force should be organised to push forward and keep in touch with the enemy. This mobile force was placed under the command of Major-General H. K. Bethell, and was organised mainly from the 66th Division. The details of its composition were as follows :

- 5th Cavalry Brigade.
- South African Brigade.
- 199th Brigade.
- 17th Armoured Car Battalion.
- 9th Corps Cyclist Battalion.
- One Company 100th Battalion M.G.C.
- 430th, 431st, 432nd Field Companies R.E.
- One Company 9th Gloucesters (Pioneers).
- 2 Squadrons Royal Air Force.
- "A" and "B" Batteries 331 Brigade R.F.A.
- 2 Sections "D" Battery 331 Brigade R.F.A.  
(4.5in. Howitzers).
- One Anti-Aircraft Section.
- 1st South African Field Ambulance.

This was called Bethell's Flying Force, and was billeted for the night of November 9th-10th in Beugnies, and afterwards kept in touch with the enemy up to the moment of the cessation of hostilities at 11 a.m. on November 11th, when it had the honour to be the farthest east of any body of British troops.





In the early morning of November 10th orders were received for the Battalion to move back to billets in the village of St. Hilaire-Sur-Helpe, at which place we arrived by 11 o'clock, and there spent the remainder of the day.

November 11th, Armistice Day, found us still in the same quarters. Referring to the Battalion War Diary the writer finds the following entry :

Weather fine and bright sunshine. The Battalion carried out work on the roads, each company working for two hours, the remainder of the day was devoted to bathing and generally cleaning up. The Brigadier visited the Battalion at 1200 hours.

What a fine example of literary restraint, on the day when the greater part of the world went mad with joy, relief, and thankfulness, the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, according to the official historian, found the day fine and bright with sunshine, and spent it working on the roads, bathing and cleaning up. What could sound more simple than this statement, and yet, again, what more symbolic. The dawn of Peace was fair and the instant need was for "cleaning up" and for "work upon the roads."

On November 12th the Battalion moved to billets in Beugnies, and 2/Lt. A. Graves joined the Battalion with a draft of 58 men from England, also members of the "B" teams rejoined their comrades.

On November 14th an interesting ceremony was held at Solre Le Chateau, when the Corps Commander, Lieut.-General Sir T. L. N. Morland, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., presented ribbons to those who had distinguished themselves during the recent fighting. Lieut.-Col. R. F. Gross, D.S.O., was in command of the Guard of Honour of the 198th Brigade. The Guard of Honour from our Battalion was composed as follows :

- \* Major L. B. L. Seckham, M.C.
- Capt. C. H. Potter, M.C.
- Capt. D. Pennington, M.C.
- R.S.M. J. Eccles.
- C.S.M. R. Bateman.
- C.S.M. A. Stout.
- Sergeant E. Clulow and 42 other ranks.

The following members of the Battalion were presented with ribbons :

25869 Private E. Gwillim, M.M.  
6051 Private C. Creighton, M.M.

The same day the Battalion moved into billets at Sars-Poteries.

On November 15th the following orders were read out to all troops on parade :

SPECIAL ORDERS  
BY

Lieut.-General Sir T. L. N. MORLAND,  
K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O.,  
Commanding XIII. Corps.

On the conclusion of hostilities and in the hour of decisive victory, I wish to express to the General Officers commanding, their Staffs, hearty congratulations on the results of their splendid efforts. During the period 3rd October to 11th November, troops of the XIII. Corps have fought a series of successful actions, have advanced a distance of 50 miles, meeting and defeating 16 actual enemy Divisions. During this period they have captured 23,000 prisoners (of 28 Divisions), 250 guns, and enormous quantities of stores of all sorts. These results are due to the fine leading of subordinate Commanders, the gallantry and devotion of all ranks, and the close co-operation between the various arms—Cavalry, Infantry, Field and Heavy Artillery, Royal Engineers, Royal Air Force, and Tank Corps—in the actual fighting, and also to the indefatigable efforts of the auxiliary services under great difficulties.

I wish to express to each individual officer, N.C.O., and man, my thanks for the part he has taken in the final victory.

H.Q. XIII. Corps.  
12th November, 1918.

(2)

66th DIVISION ON THEIR LEAVING  
XIII. CORPS.

I wish to express to the G.O.C. and all ranks of the 66th Division my appreciation of their gallant and distinguished service during the recent operations, which have resulted in complete victory. To each individual of the British, Irish, and South African Troops, comprising the Division, I express my hearty thanks for his splendid efforts.

H.Q. XIII. Corps.  
14th November, 1918.

## CHAPTER XII.

## DEMOBILISATION AND AFTER.

The period following the Armistice was a very exhilarating one. Our advance through a recently liberated portion of France and Belgium partook of the nature of a triumphal march. The strains of our drum and bugle band brought cottagers to their doors and assembled crowds in the village streets to cheer us to the echo as we passed. In the writer's memory one figure stands out pre-eminently. It was that of an old blue bloused and sabotted stone-breaker, possibly a veteran of 1870, who rose from his work as we approached to doff his cap, whilst as we passed his years seemed to fall from him like a mantle, and raising his proud white head he sang "The Marseillaise" as though his spirit was aflame with the fierceness of that song; perhaps the words, to him, were a veritable "Nunc Dimittis" since he had lived to see freedom once again after four years' bondage.

During that time our thoughts often turned to those of our comrades who had fallen by the way, and we felt ourselves to be members of a very great army whose visible numbers were few. The tributes of joy and thankfulness, the welcome we received, the triumphal arches, the offerings of flowers and refreshment: all these things, we felt, were offered to us as the representatives of "those others" by whose sacrifice this liberation had been obtained. We realised also something of what this liberation meant when we looked at those simple country folk who seemed now so happy, and saw how colourless they were, how starved, how shabby; we realised it yet more when we spoke with some of them and heard their stories of the sad, lean years of German rule, or of that great terror when first the Germans came—"Le Passage, Monsieur, Ah c'était triste." Then followed a story of murdered civilians and of brutal cruelty taken from the experience of their own particulars, neighbours, and locality.

A pathetic spectacle was provided by the freed prisoners of war whom we met trudging along in hundreds,

British, French, and Belgian, all exhausted and emaciated, but some mere bags of bones and bundles of rags who could scarce put one foot before the other.

Of the war itself there was still evidence in the explosion of delayed action mines which went up for days after the Armistice at cross roads, bridges, and at important points along the railway lines; whilst a very pleasant testimony to the hurried nature of the enemy's retreat was borne by the litter which lay along the sides of the main roads. Steel helmets, gas masks, shells, rifles, equipment, belts of ammunition, machine guns, with occasional motor cars, motor lorries, steam tractors, and guns all thrown away or abandoned by the Boche. It was for all the world as if we were engaged in a grotesque paper chase.

On November 16th the Battalion moved to L'Epine Harnaut, and on the following day marched to billets in Rance, which was just across the Belgian frontier. Next day we attended a thanksgiving service held in the village by the kind permission of Monsieur Le Curé. It is evident that public feeling was greatly moved when an ecclesiastical authority permitted a Protestant service to be held in a Roman Catholic Church. "Les Belges" were very enthusiastic over the appearance of our soldiery, so well equipped and everything so "chic," this in contrast to "les Boches," who were so down at heel. Madame at one of our billets remarked that what struck her most were the brass buttons on our uniforms and that when she saw these, as we marched in, she remarked to a friend, we were not evidently short of metal, and it would be safe to bring again to the light of day their brass and copper utensils which had been hidden away against the certainty of German requisitions.

On November 19th the Battalion moved to Jamagne, where we stayed a day or two and moved on again on the 23rd through Rosee to Merville. Here, in the afternoon, we received an official welcome from Monsieur Le Maire and Monsieur Le Curé in front of the village Church with the populace gathered round. Lieut.-Col. Patterson, the C.O. of the Inniskillings (who were billeted in the village) replied to the civic and ecclesiastical welcome, and his speech was interpreted by Capt. Bisson, our M.O., who was a Guernseyan. Later at "Tattoo" our drums and bugles had to make a tour of the whole village, the local celebrities marching behind with flags, followed by the

remainder of the population, the children and younger people dancing and shouting, and the old folk hobbling along, all equally delighted. Deliverance from the Boche meant as much to them as deliverance from Egypt did to the Israelites of old.

On November 24th the Battalion marched to Hastieres Lavaux on the Meuse and then down the valley to Neffe on the outskirts of Dinant. Here the Battalion stayed until December 15th. During this period one hour per day was allotted to training, the remainder of the time, except for an occasional route march or bathing parade, was spent according as each individual had a mind except for occasional tours of duty on guard at railway bridges or such like important points. During the greater part of the time, one company—"D" Company—was on detached duty guarding the important railway bridges across the Meuse at Anseremme some two miles up the river from Dinant. The time passed pleasantly, our billets were comfortable, and we found much to interest us in the town of Dinant, which bore many signs of the destruction wrought by "the horde of Saxons" in August, 1914. On August 13th of that year there was much fighting in the streets, and the French and German guns thundered away at each other from both sides of the Meuse, but the artillery used on both sides were light field guns and not much damage was done. During the following days the French destroyed the bridges and withdrew to the west bank of the river, where they remained until the order for a general retreat was given. On August 22nd large bodies of German troops arrived and "Le Pillage" started. Whilst the glorious river was looking at its best under the summer sun destruction and agony was let loose, and the Boche raged through the town without pity for age or sex. When the fury had passed, more than half the town was absolutely destroyed and some 500 civilians had been killed. Moreover, this was not a case in which the rank and file had "seen red" and got out of hand, but it was all done according to plan and by direct order of the Higher Command.

The writer's French is not good, but he could distil sufficient tragedy from the tales that he was told. A shopkeeper who had a temporary shack near the Church showed him his thumb shot off at the lower joint and a long scar across the top of his head, and told how he had

been lined up with a crowd of others and shot, how he raised his hand to protect his head as they fired, how one bullet took away his thumb, whilst another ploughed across his crown and dropped him senseless, how he lay for hours under a heap of dead, and at night crawled away to safety.

A middle-aged woman told of a household which comprised herself, her husband, her father, and a maid. How her husband was killed in the street, her father killed in the hall because he was slow to unbolt the door, and the maid chased shrieking from the house and bayoneted in the garden. Wonderful to relate, an Englishman, with his wife and family, had witnessed all this fighting and destruction, and had lived throughout the period of the German rule at Anseremme. He was a music hall artist by name of Permaine, a naturalised Englishman, his mother being English, his father a Spaniard. His wife was Lancashire and came from Cheetham Hill. He owed his life to the fact that he spoke German like a native, and claimed throughout to be a Spaniard and a neutral, which claim was substantiated by the Spanish Consul at Brussels. He had remonstrated with a German officer against the destruction of the town and had been shown an official order for the work. Moreover, he was forced to be one of a party to bury a batch of slaughtered civilians in a common grave, amongst the bodies was one woman who was still alive and moved her arm; remonstrance was in vain, and they were compelled to shovel in the earth on top of her. These things are written so that it may be known how in the early days the Germans did wage a war of frightfulness in territories which they invaded in order, so they alleged, to create examples which, by their ruthlessness, would be a warning to the civil population and deter it from attacks upon their forces.

When we saw the town the bridge was temporarily repaired, and there were a cluster of temporary wooden buildings on the eastern side of the river near the Church, which was itself intact except that the bulbous timber spire had vanished. The fabric of the Hotel de Ville still stood, its plinth pitted with bullet marks. It was against this building the Boche lined up civilians, men and women, and shot them. Except for these buildings, all the ruined houses had been pulled down almost to the street level and the rubbish cleared away so that the place looked like a second Pompeii with its line of streets and plans of houses

on either side. We climbed one day to the old Citadel which crowns the rock high above the old Church. The German had left his mark there also in the form of a well laid out cemetery which contained some 400 of his own and of French dead. Up there we also found an old fellow, who had probably been a guide to the place in pre-war days; if so, on our arrival he took once again to his old vocation, and described to us the August battle, as we gazed upon the town and river spread below. The Germans in the Citadel, where we stood, and on the adjoining heights the French opposite on the western bank of the river and the heights above. He pointed out the sites of the Hotel de Poste and station buildings, the first a heap of ruins, the other temporarily rebuilt, where the French had their machine guns which swept the bridge. Just above there was a big Convent or institution which was similarly held, but this was still intact.

The Kaiser, Falkenheyn, and the King of Bavaria, had all visited the Citadel at various times. Writing of visitors: the Hotel at Anseremme, where "D" Company was billeted, had at one time been the headquarters of the Duke of Wurtemburg, and a visitors' book was kept there. The last name in the book, before the officers of "D" Company entered theirs, was that of a German officer under the date of November 10th, 1918, and in the column which was headed "Duration of stay," he had written "As long as possible."

On December 13th Major W. H. Clay, M.C., joined the Battalion, and assumed duty as Second-in-Command.

On December 15th the Battalion marched out of Neffe and moved into billets at Cierquon, marching on the following day to billets in the village of On.

On December 17th Colonel Gross left the Battalion to take up the temporary duties of A.A. and Q.M.G. at 66th Divisional Headquarters, and Major Clay assumed acting command of the Battalion.

Christmas was celebrated, and the advent of the New Year found the Battalion still at On, where it had established very friendly intercourse with the inhabitants of the village by means of dances which were graced by the presence of "les jeunes filles" of the village, chaperoned by Monsieur le Maire and his wife, and also by a Christmas party for the juvenile population under seven years of age, which was held in the Convent School, under the auspices

of Monsieur Le Curé and the "good sisters"; at this every young guest received a present from a huge Christmas tree. One of our officers distributed the gifts dressed up as St. Nicholas, in a wonderful bishop's robe with pastoral staff, mitre, and episcopal ring, and disguised by a long white beard. He had a little acolyte to hold his train. Doctor Bisson had prepared a short speech for him in French, and he certainly impressed his audience. Unfortunately, however, he burnt his finger on a candle whilst getting a gift down from the tree which caused him to emit a very audible "Damn," whereupon a childish voice exclaimed in surprise, "Mais, St. Nicholas! Il est un Anglais."

During all this period the one subject of paramount interest was that of demobilisation. The first party left the Battalion to proceed to the United Kingdom for that purpose on December 22nd, and from that date onwards other parties followed regularly at frequent intervals, with the result that by the end of February the total Battalion strength was down to 232.

On March 4th the Battalion moved by motor lorry to billets in Fays. On March 25th the 66th Division as a Unit ceased to exist, and Brigadier-General A. J. Hunter, D.S.O., M.C., assumed command of the 66th Divisional Cadres.

On April 29th the long expected order arrived that the Battalion Cadre was to entrain at Ciney on May 1st to proceed to England via Antwerp. A couple of days or so was spent in an Embarkation Camp at Antwerp, and on May 5th, the Cadre, headed by the Band of the Liverpool Scottish Regiment, marched to the quay side and embarked on s.s. Sicilian at 7 p.m.

The Cadre was under the command of Major W. H. Clay, M.C., and the Adjutant was 2/Lt. C. Cheney. Its strength was 4 officers and 52 other ranks.

The Sicilian eventually sailed at 5 a.m. on the following morning and arrived at Tilbury Docks at 7 a.m. on May 7th.

It was not until 6 p.m. the same evening that the Cadre entrained for Barrow-in-Furness, where it arrived at 10 30 a.m. on May 8th. The next few days were spent in handing over the transport, blankets, kit, and the thousand and one articles handed into store by men leaving the Unit.

On Friday, May 15th, the Cadre entrained for Rochdale, where it arrived at 1.20 p.m. It was met at the station by Lord Rochdale, who commanded the 6th Lancashire Fusiliers in Egypt and Gallipoli. On arrival at the Town Hall the Cadre was welcomed by the Mayor and entertained to lunch.

Through the good offices of the Chief-Constable the men were found suitable billets over the week-end, and the officers stayed at the Wellington Hotel.

On Monday the Cadre entrained at Rochdale for Prees Heath, and were demobilised "en bloc."

With the disposal of the Cadre the Battalion had ceased to exist as a military unit, but it had not yet left the stage. The final acts of the drama had yet to be played. For months we waited, and at long last information was obtained that the King's Colour of the 2/6th Battalion had been forwarded to the Dépôt of the 6th Battalion. Arrangements were made that the Colour should be consecrated and publicly presented to the surviving members of the Battalion on December 3rd, 1921. The Lord Bishop of Manchester (Dr. W. Temple) officiated at the ceremony, which took place on the Town Hall Square, Rochdale, in the presence of a large gathering of interested spectators.

At the conclusion of the consecration service the Mayor of Rochdale raised the Colour from the altar and handed it over to the officer in charge of the Colour Party. The Earl of Derby, K.G., Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, then presented war medals to relatives of members of the Battalion killed in action, and to officers and men of the Unit.

Men of the 6th Battalion lined the sides of the enclosure, and at the conclusion of the ceremony the First and Second Lines of the 6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers marched off to the Dépôt with Band playing and Colours flying.

This was the first and probably the only time the sister Battalions had ever paraded together. The sight of three hundred bemedalled civilians in varied attire and headgear led by a band and followed by a Battalion in service dress, swinging along the streets of their Dépôt town to the tune of "Boys of the Old Brigade" brought tears to the eyes

of many who had lived for the day when their members of the 2/6th should march in that self-same parade.

At a representative meeting of officers, N.C.O.'s and men it was decided to ask permission to deposit the Colour of the Battalion in the Parish Church at Rochdale, and on Sunday, January 29th, 1922, many surviving members of the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers marched with their Colour to the Parish Church.

After morning prayer the Colour Party marched to the altar rails preceded by Lieut.-Col. Prince, V.D., the first Commanding Officer of the Battalion, who handed the Colour to Archdeacon Sale, and said :

It is the sacred wish of the officers, N.C.O.'s, and men of the 2/6th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers who served in the Great War, that this, the King's Colour, which we regard as our most cherished possession, should be placed in this Church as a lasting memorial to our illustrious dead, and as it hangs in this hallowed place it will serve to remind the present and future generations of Rochdale and district of the glorious part their fathers and forefathers played in the war : how they fought and died for God, King, and Empire.

On behalf of all ranks of the 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers I ask you to receive this, the King's Colour, in safe keeping for ever.

The Colour was placed on the altar, blessed, and returned to the Colour Party. The "Last Post" was sounded, the Colour placed in position, and with clouded eyes and throbbing hearts the surviving members of the old Battalion stood stiffly to attention called back from painful and glorious memories by the ringing notes of the "Reveille."

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"Her warfare is accomplished."

Isaiah xl., 2.

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As shadows cast by cloud and sun  
Flit o'er the summer grass,

so do past events speed to oblivion unless perpetuated in a written record.

For some time the thought has persisted in the minds of those who loved the Battalion that its history should be

written. Unfortunately no officer or man in the Battalion could be found who combined the military accuracy of a Napier, the vigour of a Carlyle, the attractiveness of a Prescott, the erudition of a Motley, the patience of a Buckle, or the English of a Froude, and this account had to be written by men who lay no claim to literary style, but who have tried, to the best of their ability, to write of those things which they knew, and to testify of those things which they had seen, in the hope that their efforts may assist to keep alive the spirit of comradeship amongst old friends and preserve a record of the Battalion to which so many gave alike their affection and their service.

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Come let us fill a bumper,  
And drink a health to those  
Who fought in France and Flanders,  
And wore the Minden Rose.

## ROLL OF HONOUR.

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"Qui procul hinc" the legends writ—  
 The frontier grave is far away—  
 "Qui anti diem periit:  
 Sed miles, sed pro patria."

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Major E. S. Hurlbatt, M.C.  
 Capt. E. J. Jones  
 Capt. J. A. Kay  
 Capt. R. Farnham  
 Lieut. A. L. Baseley  
 Lieut. H. F. Goldsmith  
 2/Lt. T. R. Taylor  
 2/Lt. G. C. Thompson  
 2/Lt. R. Leak  
 2/Lt. H. Snell  
 Lieut. P. H. Taylor  
 2/Lt. T. L. Pedley  
 2/Lt. G. W. Parker  
 2/Lt. J. E. S. Dyer  
 2/Lt. T. P. Miller  
 2/Lt. H. Wilson

Major F. A. H. Bealey  
 Capt. J. R. Cameron  
 Capt. J. H. Johnston, M.C.  
 Capt. W. H. Williams  
 Lieut. H. Stevenson  
 2/Lt. F. H. Coe  
 2/Lt. I. Skene, M.C.  
 2/Lt. J. Sutherland  
 2/Lt. J. D. A. Bell  
 2/Lt. W. A. Benson  
 2/Lt. J. B. McCabe  
 2/Lt. E. Mead  
 2/Lt. J. N. Robinson  
 2/Lt. C. Jackson  
 2/Lt. A. Wilson  
 2/Lt. A. Clarke

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Pte. A. Airton  
 Cpl. A. Alston  
 Pte. W. Armstrong  
 Pte. A. Anderson  
 Pte. J. J. Arch  
 Pte. G. H. Ashworth  
 Pte. L. Ashworth  
 Cpl. F. Ashworth  
 Pte. J. W. Aspinall  
 Pte. J. Baker  
 Pte. G. Bradley  
 Pte. F. Bamford  
 Pte. G. Bancroft

Pte. A. Banks  
 A/Sgt. R. Barker  
 Pte. S. L. Barlow  
 Sgt. J. S. Barrett  
 L/Cpl. J. F. Baskerville  
 Pte. G. H. Bailey  
 Pte. R. Beaumont  
 Pte. T. Beck  
 Pte. W. Bennett  
 Pte. J. W. Betts  
 Pte. J. Blackshaw  
 L/Sgt. W. Blears  
 L/Cpl. W. H. Booth

Sgt. A. Brearley	Pte. A. Douthwaite
L/Sgt. T. Brereton	Pte. R. Derbyshire
Pte. M. A. Brogden	Pte. S. Downes
Pte. F. Brine	Pte. G. Drake
L/Cpl. C. W. Bromley	Pte. W. G. Drury
Pte. H. Brooker	Pte. W. J. Dickinson
Pte. F. Buckle	Pte. R. Dunne
L/Cpl. C. R. Butterworth	Pte. F. Dunn
Pte. A. Butterworth	Pte. J. Durnall
Pte. R. Cayley	Pte. R. E. Eccles
Pte. J. Carney	Pte. W. A. Edmondson
Pte. P. Carpenter	Pte. J. Ellidge
Pte. R. W. Carter	Pte. W. Emmerson
Pte. S. J. Carter	Cpl. W. Etherington
Pte. T. Cawley	Pte. W. English
Pte. W. Chadwick	Pte. P. English
Pte. A. P. Cheadle	Pte. W. Ellison
L/Cpl. F. Clark	Pte. H. Entwistle
Pte. J. H. Cockroft	Pte. W. Ethell
A/Cpl. F. Coles	Pte. W. Evans
Pte. L. Collier	Pte. D. Fairbairn
Pte. J. H. Condliffe	Pte. H. A. Farrow
Pte. J. J. Conroy	L/Cpl. F. C. Ferrers
Pte. G. M. Conway	Pte. F. Fielder
Pte. E. Coppen	Pte. F. Fielden
Pte. G. C. Coupe	Pte. A. Fitton
L/Cpl. M. Chiswell	Pte. L. Fitzsimons
Pte. C. Crabb	Cpl. W. Fitton
Pte. E. Crowther	Pte. G. Fletcher
Pte. G. Crabtree	Pte. H. Foulger
Pte. F. Cram	Pte. J. A. Franklin
Pte. J. Craven	Pte. J. Fowler
Pte. J. Crompton	Pte. J. B. Fox
Pte. E. Crossley	Col.-Sgt. W. A. Frettingham
L/Cpl. F. Crossley	Pte. J. W. Freeston
Sgt. W. Cryer, D.C.M.	Pte. R. Gaddas
Pte. E. Cryer	Pte. F. H. Gaskell
Pte. S. Davies	L/Cpl. A. George
Pte. W. Davies	Pte. F. Gibbons
Pte. T. Daley	Pte. J. Gregory
Pte. A. Dowson	Pte. J. H. Gordon
Pte. F. B. Day	Cpl. J. Grady
L/Cpl. W. Dickinson	Pte. W. C. Guppy
Pte. G. C. Davies	Cpl. J. Halliwell
Pte. F. Dixon	Pte. J. W. Hamer
Pte. E. C. Dodson	Pte. R. Hammond
Pte. J. Donegani	Pte. L. G. Harris

Cpl. F. Hartley	Sgt. D. Lewis
Pte. S. Harvey	Pte. G. H. Loader
Pte. W. H. Haskayne	Pte. J. Lord
Pte. S. Hassall	Pte. J. W. Lord
Pte. S. Hayes	L/Cpl. E. J. Lowe
Cpl. W. Heap	Sgt. J. Lucas
Pte. A. Henshall	Pte. A. Luxford
Pte. F. Higginbottom	Pte. P. Lynch
Pte. W. Higgins	Pte. G. A. Macdonald
Pte. W. Hill	Pte. C. McAteer
Pte. J. Hogg	Cpl. T. McInerey
Pte. J. Holbrook	Pte. H. A. McKay
Pte. B. Holden	Pte. W. Maden
Pte. J. Hollindrake	Pte. J. Marland
Pte. J. Holt	L/Cpl. F. Markland
Pte. H. Holmes	Pte. G. Mayor
L/Cpl. A. Holroyd	Pte. J. Mee
Pte. I. Hopkins	Pte. R. Middleton
Pte. J. Hopkins	Pte. W. R. Millin
Pte. J. Home	Pte. J. Mills
L/Sgt. W. Hosker	Pte. J. W. Mitchell
Pte. J. Howarth	L/Cpl. H. Molyneux
Pte. E. A. Huckerby	Pte. A. Monk
Pte. G. Hyde	L/Cpl. J. A. Moore
Pte. W. Ingham	Cpl. J. Moran
Cpl. F. Ince	Pte. E. Morris
L/Cpl. W. Jackson	Cpl. J. Murphy
Pte. A. Jameson	Pte. J. Newton
Sgt. A. E. Johnson	Pte. G. Nixon
Pte. A. Jones	Pte. H. Nuttall
Pte. G. I. Jones	Pte. J. B. Nuttall
Pte. J. Jones	Pte. J. W. Nutter
Pte. T. A. Jones	Pte. T. O'Connor
Pte. H. Kay	Pte. L. Oliver
Pte. A. Kendrick	Pte. O. Ormerod
Pte. W. E. Kimbley	Pte. J. Oulton
Pte. S. E. King	Pte. J. H. Owen
Cpl. C. Kirby	Pte. W. Parkinson
C.S.M. A. Kitchen	Pte. O. C. Paskell
Pte. A. Laycock	L/Cpl. J. G. Peak
Pte. H. Laycock	L/Cpl. W. Pethard
Pte. W. Leah	Pte. E. A. Pennington
Pte. H. Lee	Pte. J. Pickavance
L/Cpl. W. Lee	Cpl. J. R. Piggin
Pte. T. Lees	Pte. H. Platt
A/C.S.M. E. J. Legg	Pte. A. E. Powell
Pte. C. S. Lewis	Pte. S. Powell

Cpl. D. Rattray	L/Sgt. H. Taylor
Pte. E. T. Richards	Pte. J. Taylor
Pte. J. Riding	L/Cpl. W. Taylor
Pte. D. Riley	Pte. A. Thom
Pte. T. F. Roberts	Pte. F. Thompson
Cpl. H. Robinson	L/Cpl. T. Towers
Pte. T. Rogerson	L/Cpl. F. Tooth
L/Cpl. R. Rogers	Sgt. L. Trigg
Pte. W. Rostern	Pte. J. T. Turner
Pte. A. Rothwell	Pte. R. Turner
Pte. J. H. Rothwell	Pte. T. H. Tyler
Sgt. A. Routh	Pte. H. Tweedale
Pte. A. Russell	Pte. A. Vanderstock
Pte. T. Ryan	Cpl. A. J. Walbeoff
Pte. J. T. Schofield	Pte. J. Wall
Pte. J. Schoolden	Pte. C. Walker
Pte. G. Sewell	Pte. G. Walton
Pte. F. Sharples	Sgt. C. Ward
Pte. J. Sheard	L/Cpl. A. Watton
L/Cpl. C. Smith	Pte. W. Wharton
Pte. E. C. Smith	Pte. A. Webster
Pte. T. Smith	Pte. S. Whitaker
Cpl. H. Smith	Pte. J. Whitehead
Pte. W. Smith	Cpl. W. Whatmough
Pte. F. E. Stainrod	Pte. S. Whiteley
Pte. J. R. Sutcliffe	L/Cpl. H. J. Wigglesworth
Pte. T. M. Stanfield	Pte. T. Wild
L/Cpl. R. Stansfield	Pte. A. Wiles
Pte. H. Stewart	Pte. E. P. Wilks
Pte. W. B. Strutt	Pte. J. A. Wilkinson
Pte. J. A. Sutherland	Pte. T. Williams
Pte. T. Steeple	Pte. W. Willis
Pte. J. Sweeney	Pte. C. Wood
Pte. W. Tatham	Pte. D. Woodhead
Pte. J. Taggart	Pte. S. P. J. Wright
C.Q.M.S. C. Tancred	Pte. J. Yates
Sgt. A. Taylor	Pte. T. Yates
Pte. C. Taylor	

## BATTLE HONOURS.

The Battle of Messines ... ... June 13th, 1917  
 German Attack on Nieuport, July 10-11th, 1917

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### THE BATTLES OF YPRES, 1917.

The Battle of Poelcapelle, October 9-11th, 1917

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### THE FIRST BATTLES OF THE SOMME, 1918.

The Battle of St. Quentin, March 21st-23rd, 1918  
 Actions at the Somme Crossings, March 24-25th, 1918  
 The Battle of Rosières, March 26-27th, 1918

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### THE BATTLES OF THE HINDENBURG LINE.

The Battle of the Selle, October 17-25th, 1918  
 The Battle of the Sambre, November 8-11th, 1918.

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### GENERAL OFFICERS OF THE 66th DIVISION IN FRANCE.

General The Hon. Sir H. A. Lawrence, K.C.B.,  
 until January, 1918.

Major-General Sir Neill Malcolm, C.B., D.S.O.,  
 until 29th March, 1918 (wounded).

Major-General H. K. Bethell, C.B., C.M.G.,  
 C.V.O., D.S.O.

### ARTILLERY.

Brigadier-General J. J. Macmahon, until 13/7/17.

Brigadier-General D. B. Stewart, D.S.O., until  
 28/8/17 (wounded).

Brigadier-General A. C. Lowe, until 24/11/17  
 (killed).

Brigadier-General A. Birtwistle, C.B., C.M.G.,  
 D.S.O.

**197th BRIGADE.**

- Brigadier-General F. L. Banon, C.B., until 12/7/17.  
 Brigadier-General O. C. Borrett, D.S.O., M.C.,  
     until 30/3/18 (wounded).  
 Brigadier-General L. L. Wheatley, D.S.O., until  
     22/9/18.

**198th BRIGADE.**

- Brigadier-General G. E. Matthews, until 13/4/17  
     (killed).  
 Brigadier-General A. J. Hunter, C.M.G., D.S.O.,  
     M.C.

**199th BRIGADE.**

- Brigadier-General J. O. Travers, C.M.G.,  
     D.S.O., until 17/3/18.  
 Brigadier-General G. C. Williams, C.M.G.,  
     D.S.O.

**SOUTH AFRICAN BRIGADE.**

- Brigadier-General W. Tanner, C.M.G., D.S.O.
- 

**UNITS OF THE 66th DIVISION IN FRANCE.****ROYAL ARTILLERY.**

- 330th Brigade.  
 331st Brigade.  
 332nd Brigade  
     (transferred to A.F.A. 11/4/17).

Divisional Ammunition Column.

**ROYAL ENGINEERS.**

- 430th Field Company.  
 431st Field Company.  
 432nd Field Company.  
 Signal Company.

**PIONEERS.**

- 10th D.C.L.I. until 7/11/17.  
 5th Borders, until 6/5/18.  
 9th Gloucesters.

## 197th BRIGADE.

- 3/5th Lancashire Fusiliers. Disbanded 13/2/18.  
 2/6th Lancashire Fusiliers. Transferred to 198th  
     Brigade, August, 1918.  
 2/7th Lancashire Fusiliers. To U.K. 29/6/18.  
 2/8th Lancashire Fusiliers. Disbanded 31/7/18.  
 Replaced August, 1918, by South African Brigade.

## 198th BRIGADE.

- 2/4th East Lancs. Transferred to 39th Division  
     16/8/18.  
 2/5th East Lancs. Disbanded 31/7/18.  
 2/9th Manchesters. Transferred to 199th Brigade.  
 2/10th Manchesters. Disbanded 15/2/18.

Reconstituted August, 1918.  
 6th Lancashire Fusiliers.  
 5th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.  
 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

## 199th BRIGADE.

- 2/5th Manchesters. Disbanded 31/7/18.  
 2/6th Manchesters. Disbanded 31/2/18.  
 2/7th Manchesters. Disbanded 31/7/18.  
 2/8th Manchesters. Disbanded 13/2/18.

Reconstituted August, 1918.  
 18th King's Liverpools.  
 9th Manchesters.  
 2nd Connaught Rangers.

## MACHINE GUN COMPANIES.

- 202nd Company. Disbanded 10/4/18.  
 203rd Company. Disbanded 10/4/18.  
 204th Company. Disbanded 10/4/18.

Reconstituted August, 1918.  
     100th Company.

## ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS.

- 541st. Company of Divisional Train.  
 542nd Company of Divisional Train.  
 543rd Company of Divisional Train.  
 544th Company of Divisional Train.

## ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS.

2/1st East Lancs. Field Ambulance.

2/2nd East Lancs. Field Ambulance

2/3rd East Lancs. Field Ambulance.

## DIVISIONAL EMPLOYMENT.

254th Company.

66th Mobile Veterinary Section.

## ADDITIONAL HONOURS.

The following additional honours were gained during  
the 5th Army fighting :

## Military Medals.

Gazetted	27	6	18.—	240,837	Sgt. W. Henry.
				241,886	Cpl. E. Hoyle.
				241,003	Act./Sgt. W. Ashworth.
	12	6	18.—	242,857	L/Sgt. R. K. Taylor.
	8	8	18.—	242,222	L/Cpl. W. J. Rimmer.

## APPENDIX.

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*AN account of his adventures after capture by the Germans in the village of Aubercourt on March 30th, 1918, and of his subsequent escape.—Contributed by Private Steve Hinde, M.M.*

"As we went back I could see the system Jerry was adopting in this big push of his. He was advancing in four lines some 800 yards apart. But what are these coming up on the left? Wagons loaded with telegraph poles some 10 feet long ready, complete with cross bars and insulating pots. Three men are busy digging a hole just in front of the leading wagon, and further on towards the line are other groups of three men digging holes. Two men from the top of a wagon hand down a post, the men on the ground hold the post in position and fill in the hole with earth and stones. We pass these wagons, and a little behind are more slow moving wagons loaded with coils of telegraph wire, and men are busy wrapping the wire round the pots on the crossbars of the poles; they do their job quickly, for the wagons hardly stop. As far as we could see there was nothing but advancing German troops; light field guns and cookers are between the first and second lines, and in the rear of the troops are heavy artillery, transport, and observation balloons towed by motor wagons. I noticed most of the men seemed smart, fresh young fellows, and some cried out to us in English as we passed: 'What about it now, Tommy? We win this time.' We replied 'Not yet.' This turned their query into curses. Four of us were given a stretcher case to carry, and we jogged along for about an hour with this new job of ours until we came to a small house with a Red Cross flag outside. 'What ho!' I thought this must be Jerry's doctors' headquarters, and such it proved to be. We handed over our wounded Jerry and were allowed to ramble about the farmyard—though the guards were never

far away. I thought I would have a little survey, so I went into a little outbuilding. When I got inside I had a shock; it had been turned into a German dead house; they were simply piled up on top of each other—all dead Jerries. I could not see one of ours. It was a shocking place. After about an hour's rest we were marched further back. Later in the afternoon we were placed in what had been previously a Detention Camp for our German prisoners. I had to smile as I thought of the reversed position. Our Battalion passed this camp when we were marching up to the line from Marcel Cave. Here in this camp we rested for about another hour, when a fresh guard marched us to a village about two and a half miles away. On our arrival there we were immediately set to work to dig large graves for our dead. Some 14 bodies to each grave. We were busy burying our dead until nearly dusk; there were a lot of them, but not by a long way did our dead come up to Jerry's. By heavens, he had got a bashing and no mistake. As we marched further back a few days later I could see by the number of German dead lying about that Jerry had lost a terrible lot of men. At last our guard called us together—we ourselves were half dead by this time—and marched us off to a large building which was to be our resting place for the night; we got nothing but a drink, but being tired we did not worry much, and very quickly fell asleep. Next morning (March 31st) our guard came in and brought us each a thick slice of black bread and a drink that was called coffee. The bread tasted sour and the coffee bitter. Everybody played 'hell,' as this was something quite new in the way of food. However, it was there, and nothing fresh came along, so we ate the bread, which nearly choked us, and drank the coffee, which we were certain was poison. After a while the guard called us out and counted us. Finding all correct, he marched us to a large sized house in the village, where we were given a handful of small round biscuits each which had evidently come from an English ration dump. We then marched off. I did not recognise any of the places we passed; we rested twice on this journey which lasted until late in the afternoon, when we were halted in the yard of a large chateau. Here we were handed over to a fresh guard, which led us off to a large outbuilding, where we found some 50 or 60 of our fellow Tommies (none of the 2/6th, though). Here at this place we had a fairly decent meal

of a mixed vegetable stew. Afterwards we joined in general conversation which touched upon those things which affected us all. How far had Jerry got? Where and what place was this chateau? What was our future destination? How would our people at home get news of us? I saw many eyes grow misty with tears when this last subject was mentioned. At last our guards broke up our discussion, and we were marched off to an upper story barn. Here the guard counted us once again, took a careful look at every one of us, bade us 'Good night, Englanders,' went out, and locked the door. We talked for a while, and finally drifted into the land of mists. Next morning (April 1st) the guard waked us up and called us out in the yard below. We were marched off without bite or drink to another village, where we arrived about midday. Here we were given a fairly decent meal, judged only by 'War prisoners' rations,' two slices of dry black bread, and a small portion of Jerry's bully beef. The meal over, we were marched off again until the late afternoon, when we were installed for the night in another of our old Prisoners of War enclosures. Next morning, April 2nd, we were called out and marched off again without food, and about 2 30 p.m. we arrived in a war prisoners' camp near Rosières. Here we had our first meal for the day, which consisted of a bowl of warm water in which were two or three small pieces of horse meat and half a dozen strings of macaroni floating about; this box-up was called soup, and along with it was one piece of dry black bread. Our full day's ration of food during the time I was a prisoner was a cup of their confounded coffee at 7 a.m., after working all day until 5 or 5 30 p.m. we had issued to us 365 drachms of black bread (3 thin slices), and a small bowl of soup."

(Private Hinde remained in this camp for three or four weeks, working with others most days in the Rosières Goods Yard. After about a month, with others, he was transferred to a Field Bakery at Villers Carbonnel, where they were engaged in chopping wood for fuel and helping to stack and load bread. About a fortnight after Whitsuntide he was transferred to another field bakery at West Misery, "and West Misery it was by name and by nature." By this time Hinde had made himself well acquainted with the German language, and was using his ears as well as his eyes to gather information with view to an early departure.

On the evening of the 10th of July he and a pal, "Ginger" Darborough, slipped out of camp and struck off in the direction of the line. After various adventures they were recaptured in the early morning of July 12th and taken off to Peronne, where Hinde met a Private Halstead of "D" Company. Here they were subjected to a preliminary interrogation, and then sent back to West Misery. The Camp Commandant seems to have treated them very decently, told them they would be sent shortly back to Peronne for trial, after which they would be moved to another camp. They got off lightly at this trial. They were warned that they would be shot if they again attempted to escape and were sent to a Prisoner of War Camp a few miles to the south of Peronne and not far from their old camp at West Misery. This camp was surrounded by a high barbed wire fence, and contained some 200 prisoners. The Camp Commandant was a German sergeant with a dozen guards under him.) But to return to Private Hinde's own story :

"During the time we were in this camp our work lay in the making of a light railway. This would have been a pleasant job but for our starved condition. We worked from 7 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock in the afternoon on nothing but a cup of coffee. On returning to camp we got two thin slices of bread with about an ounce of vegetable fat or Jerry's bully beef, and an extra ration composed of soup with putrid horse beef in it obtained from dead horses which had been killed by shell fire up the line. The work on the light rail road, as I have said, would not under ordinary circumstances have been hard, but in our weak state it took a lot of will power to keep lifting the pick up and down, and when the sun got right overhead in those hot July days it was sheer torture to keep at work, as a sort of drowsy dizziness came over you. I have seen many a man faint and fall right over on his face, but Jerry had a very effective cure for those fainting cases : all he did was to kick them back into consciousness again. On coming round through this painful recovery the man would either crawl or stagger to his work again, and by painful degrees commence once more to swing his pick, and any sign of returning faintness was quickly remedied by the application of a thin switch which most of the guards carried in addition to their rifles. Aye, they were swine those guards. Some of them could never pass a

man without giving him a crack if they caught him bending. After a week or two our camp was moved to a spot about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Peronne. We erected this new camp ourselves under the supervision of the camp sergeant, and we managed to leave some weak places in the barbed wire fencing. This camp was situated on some very marshy ground which swarmed with mosquitos and another pest, a tiny black fly, which bit like the very devil. The water for our coffee was drawn from a small stream near by which was fouled by the horses from Jerry's transport. These things, combined with the putrid horse flesh eaten, started an epidemic which wiped our fellows out like wiping chalk marks from a blackboard. It was common at this time to wake up in the morning and find seven or eight of your pals had passed over during the night. It was partly this epidemic that decided 'Ginger' Darborough and I that it was about time to go on tramp again, and I said to him one evening : 'Ginger, I've decided to go to-morrow night.' 'Has ta?' said Ginger. 'Very well, then, to morrow night we're off.' And with that we turned in for the night. About 1 a.m. we were awakened by the sound of heavy gunfire. So Ginger and I went out. By heavens, what a sight. Looking towards the line we saw a continuous flashing of guns, and I said : 'Old pal, that makes our going all the easier to-morrow night. There's a hell of a fight on in the direction of Amiens, and things towards the line will be generally confused.' We stood a little while watching, and then turned in wishing that to-morrow night had already arrived. The following morning (August 8th) we were put to work digging a trench just off the Peronne Road which ran past our camp. About 11 a.m. there was a big rush of Jerries past the camp making for Peronne, minus rifle and equipment, they were coming across the fields from the direction of the line, and not long afterwards transport wagons came tearing along, followed by several field kitchens, and still more men, a string of ambulance wagons and several light field guns; whilst to make things better a number of our English aeroplanes came over and dropped a few bombs on the road. This put the wind up them proper, and the now panic stricken Jerries left the road and fled across the fields in great confusion, some of our camp guards going with them. Of course, all work stopped, and we stood watching and waiting events. We asked several Jerries

what was the matter. They replied: 'Tommy coming! Tommy coming!' 'Aye,' I said to Ginger, 'it looks as if we should be spared the trouble of breaking camp.' 'Aye,' said Ginger, 'it looks like it.' Just then the German sergeant camp commandant came and ordered us back to camp. When we were inside the Jerry sergeant told us through an interpreter that if our soldiers came through from that moment he gave himself and his remaining guards up to us as prisoners of war and hoped that we would remember he had always treated us fairly and well. 'Well,' I said to Ginger, 'this beats Huntley and Palmer.' We had an early dinner that day and watched and waited fully expecting our troops to put in an appearance. About 4 o'clock we received orders to pack our bedding and get ready to march further back. During the afternoon Ginger and I had been busy loosening the barbed wire behind the camp latrines, and four more men had decided to come with us. Two City of London Battalion men, another West Yorks (but not of the same Battalion as Ginger), and an Aussie. Whilst the others were packing up, our little party of six, one after the other, slipped behind the latrines, crept through the loosened wire, and round the back of the camp, where we were hidden by the camp buildings and a hedge of trees. We trotted over the rough ground until we came to an old trench full of rank grass and weeds, in which we hid. As soon as it was dark we set off to our direct front, our progress was slow as the ground was rough and littered with lengths of old barbed wire, and occasionally one of our party would slip into a shell hole. At length, however, we topped a rise, and viewed a wonderful display of 'Verey' lights in front of us. In the centre we could see any number of red and green lights, and occasionally a great white flare would burst out. On the left and right the lights seemed more steady and did not rise so high. I turned to Ginger: 'An we to mak' for t' centre then, Steve?' I said: 'Yes, come on.' So off our little party of six set towards the centre where these many coloured lights seemed to be doing a kind of devil dance. We halted now and again to catch a sound should there be anything on the move. Once we heard voices on our right, and dropped flat. In a few minutes we could dimly make out the forms of a small party of Jerries who appeared to be coming straight for us. I began to breathe through my clenched teeth and my heart pounded

like a steam hammer. I think my pals were in the same plight, as we had early in our breakaway agreed not to be retaken. The tension was relieved by the Jerries turning away to the left. We waited until they had got well on their way and then got up. 'Phew,' said the Aussie, 'I thought we were done.' We all agreed it was a near squeak. It wasn't a warm night, yet as I stood there I simply dripped sweat, and all of our little party were in the same plight. We crossed over to the point where we judged the Jerries had turned and found a roadway, and continuing our way in about half an hour we came to a shell battered village (*Berny en Santerre?*), where we found a well from which we refreshed ourselves. As we stood by the well we heard steps coming down the street and we quickly crouched down by the side of the road. The man came on, he was alone, and just as he was opposite to us one of us slipped on a loose stone. The Jerry stopped and called out, then moved towards us as if to come and investigate. Thank the Lord that there was no moon that night and that the Jerry had a second thought, and, having taken two strides forward, turned again and continued his way along the battered street. I'd a full brick in my right hand, so had the Aussie, who was on my left, and the others a little behind were similarly armed, so you can imagine what would have happened had the Jerry come on. 'God love me,' said one of the City of London men, 'let's get out of this; it's twice to-night we've nearly been trapped.' So on we plodded, ever keeping in sight the red and green lights. The rest of that exciting night was as eventful as any I have known. We ran into a wiring party of Jerries—right amongst them we were. They were working silently and well, for we had heard no sound of men working. We had descended into lower ground, where it was pitch dark, and found ourselves right amongst them. I ran into a thundering big lump of a Jerry, who, with guttural instructions and a movement of his arm, directed me further to his left. I ran left, but forward, and worked my way through the rest of the Jerries, who whispered something as I passed close to them, but I did not answer, and when I thought that I was a safe distance from the wiring party laid down and waited. After a bit I heard a low hiss, and Ginger and the two City of London men crawled up, and they had come right through the wiring party without hindrance

or enquiry. A bit later we saw two figures crawling towards us. We called out in a loud whisper, and the answer came : 'Who the suffering hell's that?' So we knew it was the Aussie and the West Yorker. We quickly got together and had a little rest. I must here explain that during our night travelling we turned our English caps round with the neb to the back and pulled our thick camp stockings up over our trousers to make ourselves look as much like Jerries as possible, and I think this little ruse played no small part in our success. We jogged on again keeping a look-out for old trenches in view of the approach of dawn, although we had no idea what the time was. At last we came to a roadway and travelled along this for a mile or so until we spotted a tin roofed dugout a little way back off the left-hand side of the road. We went in, but we were not inside more than thirty seconds. On entering I thought it was warm. On putting out my hands I felt the framework of a bunk, and next my hand came in contact with the form of a sleeping man. The others also had found out the lie of things. One or two of the Jerries began to move, and that finished our groping about. We got out quick and put half a mile between us and that 'damned' dugout with its resting Jerries before we began to discuss things in no light manner. We set off again, and this time our quest was for water, and it was the best part of an hour before we came across some in the bottom of a shell hole. We took the risk of drinking it. It was not bad and relieved our thirst. We now wanted to find a hiding place against the arrival of dawn, and at last we found a dugout in the bottom of a decline just off the right-hand side of the road along which we had been travelling since our adventure with the sleeping Jerries. We approached it cautiously ; it turned out to be a large concrete one and not quite finished. We crept inside and made a thorough search, left two at the door, and crept round it outside, for our motto was 'Safety first.' Then when assured that all was well we turned in and I was soon asleep. I do not know how long I slept when I was roughly awakened by the Aussie shaking me and saying : 'Come on, Steve. We must get out of this.' I said : 'Why! What's the matter?' 'Come on,' said the Aussie, 'don't ask questions now, the others are already out. Get a move on.' I jumped up as I realised something serious to our safety had happened,

and we quickly joined the others on the roadway outside. It seems that not long after we had settled down in the dugout two Jerries came in and lit a candle; they spotted us, blew out the light at once, and crept out whispering to each other: 'Tommies! Tommies!' Luckily for us the Aussie was awake, although he pretended to be asleep when the Jerries lit the candle. 'Phew!' I said, 'What a close call,' and didn't we leg it up that road for a good distance before we slackened speed. Then we got well away from the road and continued towards the line over open country. We were feeling really anxious now as the dawn was breaking. At last we came to an old trench, and in we jumped. We stumbled along that trench until the dawn was fairly on us, when, by great luck, we found the entrance to a deep dugout, the steps down to which were hidden by fallen earth. We slid down and found ourselves in a fine, dry dugout with plenty of old sandbags. After a little talk about the adventures of the last few hours and a little planning for the next night we settled down to sleep, and very warm and comfortable we were, too. We slept peacefully and undisturbed. When we awoke we crawled up the slope of the steps and found the morning was well advanced. We began to sum up our surroundings, two of us observing at a time, one taking 'forward' and the other 'rear' observation. We judged the time to be about 11 a.m., and found we were near a main road upon which Jerry's transport was fairly busy. In front of us was a village. The West Yorker thought he recognised it as Estreés, but none of us could be certain, so we left it at that. Behind us observation balloons were up, and we could see the wagons to which they were attached. Whilst over to our right in front of the observation balloons Jerry's 'heavies' were firing, and some of our 'high flyers' were coming back in answer. After we had taken observation we returned to our dugout and passed the time as best we could. It was dreary waiting the coming of darkness when once again we could move on. It was as bad as waiting to be hung. We had no food with us. How slowly the day passed. We kept creeping out in turn and creeping back, and creeping out and back again. At last we thought it dark enough to start, so we quickly got on top and started off once more towards the line. We skirted round the village and came to a roadway which crossed the one alongside which we had

been travelling. Ginger and I thought we recognised it as one we had travelled along on our first attempt to escape. If it should prove to be the one we thought there should be two sentries under some trees on the left-hand side where the roads crossed. To make certain Ginger and I volunteered to do a little scouting, the rest agreeing, we set off. We walked on until we spotted a line of tall trees bordering the road. 'Ginger,' I said, 'Yon's the main Amiens Road; don't you recognise the tall trees?' 'Aye, tha'rt reet, Steve,' said Ginger. 'It's main Ahmeans Road reet enough.' Flattening ourselves out we pulled ourselves inch by inch along the ground. There was no cover on this roadside which cut across the main Amiens Road, but just in front alongside the main road itself was a small hedge. It was for this we were making, as there we should be close to the two sentries. We reached the hedge in safety and lay still in the bottom listening. Yes. The two sentries were there, though I don't suppose they were the same two who had chased Ginger and I on our previous attempt to escape. We heard them walking about, and now and again caught the sound of their voices as they held low toned conversation with each other. We could hear some one coming up the road, and we lay there scarcely breathing. The Jerries came on, three of them there were. The sentries stepped out from under the trees and challenged. 'Die ober Commandant Companie,' one replied. I nudged Ginger, he nudged in return. The three field telephone operators, for such they were, shook hands with the sentries, who returned to their post under the trees, leaving their fellow 'square heads' to continue their way towards the line up the main Amiens Road. Again I nudged Ginger, and we began to push ourselves backwards away from the hedge—a damned slow game was this—when we had gone some distance we turned round and began to creep back towards where our pals were lay waiting. At length we heard two low hisses just in front of us, our prearranged signal. We replied by two hisses, and then got up off our knees and ran crouching to where our pals lay. Lying there on the ground we described in detail what we had seen and heard. We then agreed to strike a course slightly right but forward. By this we should avoid the sentries, and then when we had safely passed them strike slightly left again until we could see the line of the Amiens Road once more. This

we did, and travelled some distance alongside that road. We passed the branch footpath where Ginger and I were recaptured on our first attempt. The ground now began to rise considerably, and we could see just ahead of us, a bit on our right, a decent sized hill, at the top of which was a black patch which we judged to be trees. We decided to make for this, and cut through the wood or whatever it was. We had not travelled far before we were halted. Phew! This was a shock. The West Yorker's wits worked quickly. 'Die ober Commandant Companie,' said he, and the sentry let us pass. We cut further over to the right for a bit, then turned a little to our left and plodded alongside the road once more. Each side of this main Amiens Road are tall poplar trees. It's a beautiful road. I must mention that our guns were shelling this roadway, so that we had to keep a watch both for Jerry and the shells. After a bit we were pulled up by hearing the sound of groans. We crept forward cautiously until we could make out the form of a wounded Jerry. We watched him for a while—it was no use throwing chances away—at last the groans grew fainter. 'I think the poor devil's going out,' I said. We decided to risk it and went forward. The Jerry had been the driver of a field kitchen; the two cooks and his two horses had also been knocked out. I put my hand on the circular lid of the field kitchen, which was quite warm. I looked at the fire box, the fire was still a dull red. We scrambled to get the mess tins from the dead Jerries, unfastened 'the kitchen' lid, and gorged ourselves with that stew. By God, I would have eaten it if it had been stewed cats. Of course, we lent our mess tins to our unfortunate pals who could not get any, as there were only three dead Jerries. I do not think we halted at this spot more than fifteen minutes, but started on again walking on the grass at the side of the road, making for the hill in front of us, which at times we could see fairly clearly by the light of the Verey lights. We were now amongst Jerry's field guns, and a damned sentry challenged us. We told him we were 'Artillery reliefs.' He would not believe it, but wanted to look for himself, so we fled away across the rough ground towards the hill. Another sentry challenged us and raised a hell of a shout, which brought a lot of his pals on the scene, so we bolted towards the left, leaving a tidy little row behind us. Fortunately, after a bit we came to a

trench and jumped in. It proved to be a new trench but empty. Here we laid low for a bit until we thought the danger was passed. Then we got out on top and listened, but could hear nothing, and whilst there an aeroplane came over, probably one of Jerry's returning from a night trip, and dropped a parachute flare. This one did not hang in the air after its release, but dropped straight to the ground and burst into light. Just the thing to light cigarettes said Ginger (we had cigarettes of Jerry tobacco but no matches), and before we could stop him he was running quickly down the trench, for the light had dropped seemingly within a few yards of the trench edge. We watched Ginger reach the light, which was about a hundred yards or so away; we saw him bend down and smother the light so as to light his cigarette; we saw him stamp the light clean out; we saw, too, the light of his cigarette as he turned towards us. It was a risky thing to show. Then we missed it and thought he had jumped down into the trench, but Ginger did not return. We grew anxious, three of us patrolled along the trench and on each side of it for a distance that must have taken us far past the place where the parachute fell, but of Ginger there was no sign. We even called him by name, risking a terrible lot by so doing, but received no reply, and turned back to rejoin our two pals, whom we had left to guard and watch should he return. On our return there was no sight or sign of him. We had another search, the Aussie and I staying behind this time. They were gone the devil of a time, and we thought they had been captured, but at last we saw them coming back a damned sight quicker than they went. They had spotted a working party of Jerries just a little ahead of where the parachute had seemed to fall. This convinced us that Ginger had been recaptured. I felt in the dumps, as Ginger and I had been close pals, and I did not want to leave the spot. But the Aussie pointed out that he might have got beyond the working party and be waiting for us further up the road. So we started off again, but no Ginger could we find. At last we came to the hill in front of us. It was pitch dark now as the trees hid all light from the line. We were just stepping into the wood itself when I banged right into two Jerry field operators; so close was I that I was staring right into the face of one of them, with a quickly muttered 'Vertzung, Comrad,' 'Pardon Comrad,' I quickly with-

drew. They called out asking who we were. We did not stop to answer but dashed away and dropped down the steep cutting out of the wood into the road below. It was a hell of a drop, and we landed with the wind knocked out of us. We picked ourselves up, however, and started off at the best speed we could muster down the road. Our artillery was shelling the road in a lively fashion, and each time we heard 'one' coming we dropped flat and then we were up again and did a sprint before the next one came. We were now past Jerry's light field guns, and the only danger we had to face was that of getting through the line. Of this we knew nothing. Almost before we were aware of it we came to a trench lousey with Jerries and a guard under the trees at the side of the road. We were challenged, and replied we came from the Artillery Commandant to the Ober Offizcer. His pals in the trench began to blather at the sentry and to confuse him, so we flew for it, going on the straight for about 20 yards, then over to the left-hand side of the road for a bit and then sprinting back to the right. After a time we settled down to a brisk walking pace again. In the next trench we came to was an officer, who made to spring out of the trench as the sentry challenged us. We did not hesitate, but sped right past the sentry to the opposite side of the road and then pelted along like hell for 30 or 40 yards, and then dropped for a breather. The two City of London men only were with me. We had lost the Aussie and West Yorker. We had now passed two trenches, and the third could not be very far in front, as we could clearly see the 'Verey' lights leave the ground as the pistol fired them. Up and on again until we heard the sound of Jerries talking. Then I told the others with a whisper to get ready, and we started forward cautiously to be challenged by another 'damned' sentry from the shadow of the trees. He got no reply; we darted past a few yards on the right, then a dart back to the left, and across to the left once more, and so on, at top speed until we could keep it up no longer, and we dropped to walking pace. We were through, as the German 'Verey' lights were behind us. There were two Jerry machine guns playing, one from either side of the road, so we had to be flat and advance by dashes as they swept away from us. At last we met a mounted Tommy. The sight of the old familiar round tin lid filled us with

joy. We told him we were escaped prisoners, but he must have thought we were escaping Jerries, so instead of a friendly greeting he said: 'Get down that road you set of bastards,' and made to chase us on. So we sped on until we met another figure coming up the road, who proved to be an Australian Army Chaplain. Now our troubles were over he took us to a dugout in which were a dozen or so Aussies. My word, what a reception they gave us. They gave us of everything they had. Good luck to them wherever they are. Meanwhile the Chaplain had 'phoned through to the Brigade H.Q., and a runner arrived to take us there. At B.H.Q. we were questioned and told all we could, which the officer said was of great importance, as they were advancing at dawn. The time was then 25 minutes past 1 a.m., August 10th, 1918. From B.H.Q. we went by car to D.H.Q., and there were questioned again. From D.H.Q. we were taken to Corps H.Q. Here we were questioned once more, and the Corps Commander shook hands with us and congratulated us on our escape. We had a drink with him, and a damned good drink it was. Other officers came in and we had more drinks. I do not remember much more, but awoke to find myself in a cosy little dugout. The Aussies had only just moved up so they could not find us any clothes, but we shaved and cleaned ourselves up. Our next move was by car through Villers Bretonneux to a place called Best Angles, where we were billeted for about three days. Here we had a pleasant surprise. We were told that our little pal Ginger had passed through there, also the Aussie and the West Yorker, and that we should all meet at a place called Glissey. We went by motor to Glissey, and sure enough we found Ginger and the West Yorker and the Aussie. Ginger told us how he came to be separated from us after he had lit his cigarette and turned to come back he had to lie flat as a party of Jerries were coming towards him. He wriggled forward and dropped into the trench to avoid being seen, and then found the working party was between himself and us. Thus he lost us, and later on his own got through Jerry's lines, and was halted by an advance post of the Aussies. Ginger told them who he was, and a big Aussie came out, lifted Ginger like a baby, and carried him into his own lines and to safety.





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